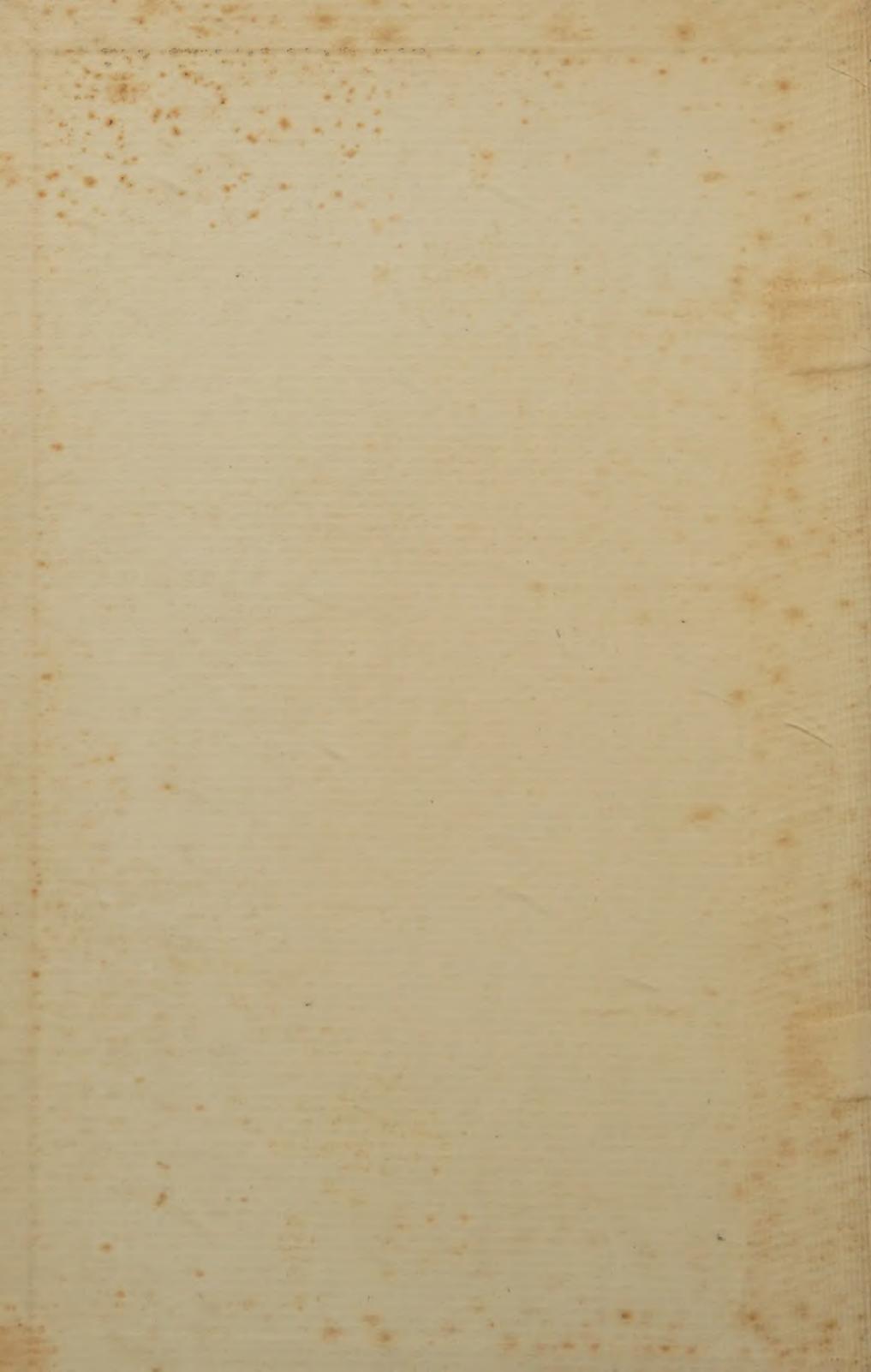


The
IMITATION
of
CHRIST





THE PRIORY,
HALE LANE,
EDGWARE.

5a

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

*Nec quaeras quis hoc dixerit :
sed quid dicatur attende.—i. 5.*



THOMAS A KEMPIS

From a portrait preserved at Zwolle

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

CALLED ALSO
THE ECCLESIASTICAL MUSIC

A REVISED TRANSLATION
NOTES AND INTRODUCTION BY

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INTRODUCTION

I

SCOPE OF THE PRESENT EDITION

THE text employed in the present translation is that of the autograph of 1441. I have made use both of the photographed facsimile, edited by Ruelens and published by Elliot Stock in 1879, and of the printed edition of Hirsche.

Canon Bramley of Lincoln has most kindly permitted me to avail myself of his collation of the Magdalen College MS. of 1438. It contains the first, second, and fourth books. The first book was written by John Dygon, a recluse of Sheen; the other two partly by Dygon, partly by another unnamed scribe.

For the text the MS. is of course of no value. When we have in our hands the final revision of Thomas himself, it is needless, at any rate for a translator's purpose, to take account of earlier editions. Two points, however, should be noticed, because of the light which they throw

upon the question of authorship. In the fourth book the scribe of the Magdalen MS. omits the fifty-sixth and the fifty-ninth chapters, and places the word *Finis* after the fifty-eighth. It seems clear that the omitted chapters did not exist in his exemplar. Now, if we take into consideration the fact that Thomas himself, in his autograph of 1441, while marking the end of the first and second books by an *Expliciunt*, puts no tail-phrase to either the third or the fourth, we may probably infer that both these books were in process of growth, or that they had not yet assumed what their author regarded as a satisfactory and final shape.

Again, in the eleventh chapter of the fourth book, the Magdalen MS. has the remarkable word *sinderesi* for *refrenatione* in the phrase *Expedit interdum refrenatione uti*. This can hardly be a mere slip. *Sinderesis* (it is the Greek *συντήρησις*) is a word apparently invented by John Damascene, and used by Aquinas and the schoolmen of his time in the sense of 'conscience' or 'self-reproach.' It was employed by Ruysbroek, whose writings were familiar to a Kempis. It may be thought not unlikely that a Kempis actually used this word in his first draft, but changed it in

later editions as too technical and pedantic for his delicate taste. It acquired a certain popular vogue, and occurs in a French form, as *sindérèse*, in a sermon of Bossuet's. But it was too much of the same family as *genera* and *species* to suit the author of the *Imitation*.

The present translation, though practically new, is based upon that of F. B. It is said that F. B. was Anthony Hoskins, a Jesuit. There had been many previous English translations. What Mr. Ingram calls 'the old version' appeared not long after the middle of the fifteenth century, and was succeeded by that of Lady Margaret and Atkynson, which was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1503. In the sixteenth century appeared other versions, made upon the Latin paraphrase of Castellio, by Hake and Rogers. Hoskins followed the then received text of a Kempis, and his work attained considerable popularity; the fourth edition appeared in 1633, and his version is that which, in a more or less disguised form, is still most familiar to English readers. I have gone over it several times in the light of the autograph text, with so much freedom that but little of the original is left, except in those passages where it is hardly possible for two translators to differ

even verbally. The object followed has been to produce a rendering as faithful in all points to the original as the genius of the English language would allow.

Till within the last few years almost all English editions have adhered to a bad custom which grew up in the controversial times of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, not simply of omitting certain passages, but of altering the expression in almost countless instances. The monk became a devout person, his cell was changed into a secret chamber, his penance into repentance, the Pope appeared as a bishop, and so on. But if a Kempis is to be read, certainly if he is to be understood, he must be allowed to speak with his own voice. His sentiment is that of the universal church ; his opinions are those of his time.

There are a few other points on which a word of explanation may be offered.

First as to the title of the book. It is well known that the *Imitation* consists of four separate treatises, each bearing its own name, and each capable of a distinct existence. Thomas himself gave no name to the book as a whole, and the most ancient title appears to be *de Reformatione Hominis*, which is found in the Mölk MS. (1435).

In the Grammont MS. the title is *Internal Consolations*. In the Magdalen MS. the first, second, and fourth books are grouped together under the title *De Musica Ecclesiastica*. The well-known name *De Imitatione*, which properly belongs to the first treatise only, and indeed only to the first chapter of that treatise, is applied to the whole collection first in the Nuremberg edition of 1494.

It would not have been wise to abandon a name which is consecrated by the usage of centuries. At the same time, the other title, *the Ecclesiastical Music*, has such high authority, is so interesting to English readers, and is in itself so apt and beautiful, that I have ventured to allow it a second place. The meaning of this title is to be sought not in the rhythmical character of the style—how could a book be said to be ‘about music’ because it is musical?—but in the subject. The music is the Inner Life, or, more specially, the *mellifluum Nomen* of the Redeemer.

The treatises are here printed in the order assigned to them by Thomas himself in his autograph of 1441—that is to say, what is generally counted as the third book appears here as the fourth. The author knew best how to secure the impression which he wished to produce, and there

INTRODUCTION

is a special reason for that arrangement which he himself preferred. From the time of Dionysius the Areopagite mystical writers divided the spiritual life into three stages: Purgation, Illumination, and Consummation. The first two treatises deal upon the whole with that moral and spiritual discipline without which no man can be a true follower of Christ; the third, on the Sacrament, points to the Eucharist as the means of union with Him who is the Light of the world; the fourth, of Internal Consolation, tells of the presence of Christ in the soul, of life in the spirit, of the mystic vision, as a Kempis understood it. In the view of the semi-mystics the Eucharist stands perceptibly higher than with their more advanced brethren, nevertheless every writer of this school is careful to explain that all forms, even the noblest and most sacred, are instrumental and transitory. Dionysius places the sacred Oil above the Eucharist, and so a Kempis sets Consolation, the unction of the Spirit, after—that is to say, above—Communion. The end follows the means.

Grave and simple as is the style of the *Imitation* it is marked by two artistic features, Rhyme and Rhythm. There is of course neither the strict

scansion, nor the constant and regular assonance of poetry, but clause is balanced against clause, the diction often exhibits a well-defined trochaic pulse, and there are innumerable recurrences of the same note, like the tinkling of little silver bells. The style is, in fact, neither prose nor poetry, but hovers between the two. The same peculiarity is found commonly in mediæval devotional writings. (See Hirsche, *Prolegomena* i., pp. 123 *sqq.*, 215 *sqq.*) No doubt it was suggested by the plainsong of the Liturgy, and a close parallel is afforded by the old Proses or Sequences.

The Sequence was so called because it followed the Gradual. The Gradual came after the Epistle, and is said to have been inserted in order to give the priest time to reach the pulpit, from which the gospel was read. It ended with Alleluia, the last note of the Alleluia was prolonged into a cadence, and out of this cadence was evolved the Sequence, which was sometimes a regular hymn, sometimes a rhythmic prose. Compositions of this kind were very numerous in the time of a Kempis, but the Council of Trent banished them all from the Missal except five, among which are the well-known hymns *Dies Irae* and *Stabat Mater*.

As the point is one of considerable interest, it may be illustrated by setting a passage of the *De Imitatione* against the prose Sequence for Easter Day.

Tunc amplius exaltabitur simplex obedientia :
quam omnis secularis astutia.
Tunc plus laetificabit pura et bona conscientia :
quam docta philosophia.
Tunc plus ponderabit contemptus diuitiarum :
quam totus thesaurus terrigenarum.
Tunc magis consolaberis super deuota oratione :
quam super delicata comedione.

De Imit. i. 24.

Now compare with the elaborate workmanship of this highly-finished passage the following :—

Victimae Paschali laudes immolent Christiani.
Agnus redemit oues :
Christus innocens Patri reconciliauit peccatores.
Mors et uita duello conflixere mirando :
dux uitae mortuus, regnat uiuus.
Dic nobis, Maria,
quid uidisti in uia ?
Sepulchrum Christi uiuentis :
et gloriam uidi resurgentis.
Angelicos testes,
sudarium et uestes.
Surrexit Christus spes mea :
praecedet uos in Galilaeam.
Scimus Christum surrexisse a mortuis uere :
tu nobis uictor Rex miserere.
Amen. Alleluia.

It will be evident from this where Thomas found the model for his style. Yet I have not ventured to print the translation in verse. The Latin rhymes necessarily disappear in the English translation. Even the rhythm can be but very imperfectly preserved. Again, the work after all is prose and not poetry, and Thomas himself wrote it continuously. Lastly, the structure of the books is very uneven. Rhyme and rhythm alike often vanish, especially in the third and fourth books. Hence it becomes really impossible to give each clause as a verse ; the attempt to do so, as will be seen from Hirsche's edition, only troubles the mind and eye of the reader.

The original punctuation has been kept throughout, except in three or four sentences, where it was necessary to manipulate the English so far that it was impossible to do so.

Thomas uses the note of interrogation ; a point followed by a small letter, equivalent to our comma ; a point followed by a capital, equivalent to our full stop ; a colon, and a peculiar sign called the *flexa* or *cliuis*, which in shape resembles a note of interrogation turned round from left to right. Hirsche thinks that the *flexa* marks a longer pause than the colon. If I may presume

to differ from him, I should say that the reverse is the case. Anyhow I have used the semicolon for the *flexa*.

The punctuation is a point of considerable importance in the Kempist controversy. If not peculiar to Thomas himself, it appears, at any rate, to be distinctive of the community to which he belonged. But it has more than an antiquarian interest. As the reader becomes familiar with it, he will observe that it is not grammatical but elocutional. The graver stops call attention to the graver thoughts and words, or to the contrasts of the balanced sentences. They help us to recall the voice of the brother who read aloud these pages during the common meal in the refectory. Every now and then there is a pause in his serious monotone, not for rhetorical effect, but to allow some Scripture phrase, some weighty word, like 'tribulation' or 'humility,' time to sink in and reach the heart.

Thomas wrote the chapters continuously, but here and there he inserted the capital C which marks a paragraph. For the convenience of the reader I have broken up the text into sections. Where these are not numbered they represent nothing but my own judgment. Where a

number is affixed the paragraph is marked by the hand of Thomas himself.

The Scripture references at the foot of the pages are taken mainly from Hirsche's edition of the text, though a good many additions have been made. They might easily have been greatly increased in number, but probably the reader will find that enough help has been given. Some of the other notes—those marked with H—are borrowed from Hirsche's text, or from his *Prolegomena*; others are from Parker's English of 1841, said in the Bodleian catalogue to have been edited by Thomas Keble, or from the little Latin edition published by the same firm; others again are new.

THE AUTHORSHIP

When Thomas a Kempis finished the autograph of 1441, he stated in a final note that it was written by his own hand, but did not expressly affirm that he was the composer and not merely the scribe. The little book contains thirteen treatises. Of these nine are unquestionably the work of a Kempis, and it is difficult to suppose that the other four, which are what we

know as the *Imitation*, can have belonged to any other author. But the form of the expression opened the door for one of the most famous of literary controversies. It is not possible here to follow out all the manifold issues of the debate. They may be studied in the volumes of Hirsche, or Kettlewell, or in the succinct and scholarly article on a Kempis in Herzog's Dictionary. A good-sized library might be filled with books on the subject. Yet the crucial facts are very few and very simple.

Many rivals have been suggested, but two only have found serious and continuous support. Of these one is John Gersen or Gessen, who is supposed to have been Abbot of the Benedictine Convent of St. Stephen at Vercelli in the early years of the thirteenth century, the other is Jean Charlier de Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, famous as an orator, as a statesman, and as a devotional writer, who is one of the most conspicuous figures in the history of the early fifteenth century. Both were named as authors of the *Imitation* in MSS. which may have been written before the death of a Kempis. Yet neither can have been the author.

There is some doubt as to whether Gesson or

Gersen ever existed. But if he was Abbot, as Renan states, in 1215, he could hardly have quoted Aquinas or Bonaventura's *Life of St. Francis*, and certainly could not have known the rhyming hexameter *Vita boni monachi crux est: sed dux paradisi*, which is the work of a Kempis himself.

Against Gerson the proof is no less certain. The *Imitation* was written by a monk for monks. But Gerson never was a monk, though he spent the last ten years of his life (1419-1429) in a house of the Celestines at Lyons, as a guest, but not as a member of the order.

These negative arguments may be accepted as quite conclusive. Nor is there any real room for doubt on the affirmative side. John Busch, in his *Windesheim Chronicle*, expressly ascribes the authorship of the first book of the *Imitation*, with other devout works, to Thomas a Kempis, whom he knew well as a member of the same order. Busch wrote in 1464, seven years before the death of a Kempis. There can be no reasonable doubt that he spoke the truth, or that what he says of the first book applies to the others also.

A vast amount of other direct or collateral

evidence has been accumulated by the writers already referred to, especially by Hirsche. But these few plain facts are really decisive of the question.

III

A KEMPIS AND THE BRETHREN OF THE
COMMON LIFE

The Brethren of the Common Life owed their origin to Gerard Groot and his friend Florentius Radewyn.

Gerard was born in 1340, and died in 1384. He sprang from a wealthy family at Deventer, was a graduate of the University of Paris, and a canonist—that is to say, not a theologian, nor a philosopher, but a church lawyer, looking for preferment in the church by practical ability in the management of ecclesiastical affairs. Canon Law was the chief buttress of the Papal power, and the canonists were mostly what we should call ultramontane. But they were not schoolmen; they were men of the world, and their concern was rather with the practical efficiency of the church than with the niceties of science or doctrine.

Gerard rose rapidly, and was living an easy

ostentatious life at Cologne, dabbling in magic and astrology, when he fell under the influence of the Friends of God and of Henry Kalkär, a devout Carthusian, and awoke to serious thoughts. It was the time of the Babylonian Captivity, when the Pope was at Avignon. The world was afflicted by three great evils, corruption, disorder and pestilence, and devout minds were looking anxiously for some new outpouring of the spirit. Gerard felt the call, and went forth as an itinerant preacher, speaking to the heart of the people in simple piety, and in their mother tongue. He has been compared to John Wesley. There is much truth in the comparison, for Wesley too was an evangelical mystic, but there was one marked difference. Twice the Mendicant Friars succeeded in persuading the Bishop of Utrecht to inhibit Gerard, and twice he obeyed.

The crowds who flocked to hear him were not satisfied merely to listen and go away, and by the advice of Florentius, the more earnest of them were gathered together in little societies, known as the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life. They lived under the same roof, observed the rules of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but were bound by no vow, so that there might be

perfect liberty of returning to the ordinary life of the world. They were to look for support, not to endowments like the monks, nor to alms like the friars, but to the work of their own hands, and, as the societies existed chiefly in towns, the work was naturally such as townspeople easily find to do.

The Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life were free spiritual societies with a strongly practical bent, but towards the end of the brief life of Gerard it became clear to the organising mind of Florentius that a further step was needed. Similar societies, known as Béguines, Friends of God, Beghards, Lollards, had sprung up shortly before, and in the spiritual unrest of the times had drifted into great disorders. Some more definite institution was needed to supply the societies with direction and stability.

Gerard wanted reform within and not without the church, new life but not division. It was necessary to moderate the exuberance of his volunteers, to provide a flywheel for the new machine, and the desired regulator could be found only in a band of officers under a stricter and more permanent discipline. Here we find the leading difference between Gerard and Wesley.

But what was possible for the one was not possible for the other. Wesley was practically driven out of the church neither by Bishop nor by people, for both were against Gerard Groot, but by the stiff parochial system of the Anglican Church, which makes it impossible to ordain a priest without a definite local charge.

This master idea emanated from Florentius Radewyn, and marks him out as one of those born statesmen who recur so often in the history of monasticism. Gerard listened to his advice, and, by way of taking the first step towards its realisation, paid his famous visit to Ruysbroek, who was at the time Prior of an Augustinian house at Groenendaal. In this wise and holy man Gerard found his model. He had been wavering between the Carthusian and the Cistercian rules, but both struck him now as too austere for his purpose, and he decided upon the establishment of one or more houses of Augustinian Canons Regular. Shortly afterwards he died of the plague at Deventer, and the conduct of the society devolved upon Florentius.

In Florentius Radewyn deep and sincere piety was combined with the external advantages of good social position, striking presence, charming

manners and strong common sense. His courage was equal to his other endowments. When first he suggested the formation of a society Gerard took alarm. ‘Live together!’ he said, ‘the Mendicants would never allow it.’ Florentius persisted. ‘But what,’ he answered, ‘is to prevent our trying? Perhaps God will give us success.’ He was the stuff of which great founders are made, not readily daunted by mere obstacles. He found many helpers, among whom John a Kempis, the elder brother of Thomas, was one of the most energetic. Their first creation was the monastery of Windesheim, somewhat to the north of Deventer. The movement spread with great rapidity. Within thirty years the mother house of Windesheim had given birth to forty-five daughter convents, of which eight were for women and thirty-seven for men. Among them was Mount St. Agnes near Zwolle. It lay on a low green hill, a little north of Windesheim, close by the river Yssel, in a land where peat swamps and grassy meadows strove for the mastery.

All these houses bore the same stamp of piety, moderation, and quiet usefulness. Gerard had chosen the Augustinian rule because he thought

it more favourable than others to physical health and intellectual activity. Shortly after the opening of Windesheim, two brothers, Berthold and Nicholas, went mad through the excess of their self-imposed austerities. To meet this danger a rule was laid down that all should eat the not illiberal diet supplied at the common table. It is said that no postulant was admitted until he had given a satisfactory answer to the questions whether he could eat well, sleep well, and would yield ready obedience to his superior. The rule of poverty was strictly enforced, but we have seen how it was understood. Each brother earned his maintenance, but all earnings were thrown into the common stock.

Quiet modest industry was the ideal pursued. Every brother, including even the Prior, took his weekly turn at the ordinary housework, helping in the kitchen, drawing the water, fetching in the fuel. An active trade was carried on, especially in the copying of manuscripts for sale. But a chief distinction of the order was its zeal for education. The brethren assisted in the work of the town grammar-schools at Deventer and elsewhere, and, as time went on, established schools of their own. In one of these, at Herzogenbusch,

there are said to have been not less than twelve hundred pupils. The education given was liberal and enlightened ; poor scholars were admitted without fee, and special attention was paid to the cultivation of music and poetry.

The Order was shortlived. The printing-press cut off its chief means of support, and finally the Reformation swallowed it up. But it ran a blameless course, it produced a singularly beautiful type of the contemplative life, and even Luther, who was no friend of monasticism, spoke of it with high commendation. ‘Would God,’ he said, ‘that all convents were like the Brother-houses !’ Luther himself had been an Augustinian.

To the Agnetenberg came Thomas a Kempis in the year 1399.

He was born at the end of 1380, or in the beginning of 1381, at Kempen, not far from Krefeld, in the diocese of Cologne. His father, John, was an artisan who owned a little land ; his mother, Gertrude, was a devout woman, and is said to have kept a school for children. The family name, Hemerken, is derived from the word ‘hammer,’ and answers very nearly to our Smith. Thomas received his first schooling at Kempen, but at the age of twelve was sent to

Deventer. Here, for the sake of his brother, he was received as a son by Florentius, who kept him for a time in his own house, then found him board and lodging under the roof of a devout woman, paid his school fees, and gave him books. Here he stayed seven years, and here he completed his education, for he never went to the university. Here he acquired the two accomplishments on which he dwells with most satisfaction, singing and the art of writing.

‘Here,’ he says, ‘in the Brother-house at Deventer, I learned how to write.’ It was a fine art in those days, cultivated by religious men as a high religious duty. Thomas himself wrote an exquisite hand, and impressed upon his novices the three cardinal virtues of a scribe, correctness, distinctness, and order. What these mean, what learning and loving care glorified the drudgery of penmanship in the old days before printing, is known only to scholars who have turned over those grand manuscripts, in which every page is a work of finished art. To the monk writing was far more than a trade. ‘If he shall not lose his reward,’ says Thomas, ‘who gives a cup of cold water to his thirsty neighbour, what will not be the reward of those who, by putting good books

into the hands of those neighbours, open to them the fountains of eternal life. Blessed are the hands of such transcribers.'

Love of music dictated to him another beautiful passage. 'It was my custom at Deventer to attend the choir-singing in the church with my schoolfellows, according to the desire of my master Bohme, who had the management of the choir as well as of the school. As often as I saw my superior, Florentius, standing in the choir, the mere presence of so holy a man inspired me with such awe, that I dared not speak when he looked up from his book. On one occasion it happened that I was standing near him in the choir, and he turned to the book we had, and sang with us. And, standing close behind me, he supported himself by placing both his hands on my shoulders; and I stood quite still, scarcely daring to move, so astonished was I at the honour he had done me.' What a picture for an artist.

At the end of his school years at Deventer Thomas set out for Mount St. Agnes, which was thenceforward to be his home. As he passed through Zwolle on his way, he applied for and received one of Pope Boniface's Indulgences,

which were then on sale in the town. At Mount St. Agnes he was 'mercifully received.' His brother was Prior there at the time, and it was against the rules to have two brothers in the same house, but this objection was set aside. Here he passed through the grades of novice and of *frater conuersus*, and, after seven years' waiting, assumed the cowl on June 10, 1406.

Here in Mount St. Agnes he lived till the day of his death, July 25, 1471. Once we hear of his travelling to Windesheim on business. In 1429 he accompanied the rest of the brethren in their migration to Ludenkerk, to escape the interdict which was the consequence of a disputed election to the Bishopric of Utrecht. During this absence he was called away from Ludenkerk to the Convent of Bethany, near Arnheim, to wait upon his dying brother. Altogether he seems to have been away from Mount St. Agnes for about three years out of seventy-two. Twice he was sub-prior, once he was procurator, or bursar, of the community, but the business of these offices fretted him, and he appears to have been glad to fall back into the quiet round of copying good books, writing his little treatises, teaching his novices, and meditating in his beloved cell. *Ama*

nesciri, he says in the *Imitation*, and his happiness was found in those conferences which were a feature of the religious life among the Augustinians, when three or four brethren would meet together to exchange their spiritual experiences, or, better still, *in angello cum libello*, ‘in a little nook with a little book,’ or, best of all, in those precious moments when the divine grace flooded his soul and he heard the voice of the Beloved. The great charm of the *Imitation* is its absolute sincerity ; it is a faithful picture of the writer’s life, a life like that hidden moorland brook which Keble has described in the *Christian Year*. Mr. Wheatley, in his *Story of the Imitation*, gives a portrait of a Kempis. He is depicted in long, soft robes, with a book in his hand, and a face sweet, timid, pale, and pensive, like a lily bathed in dew, or like an incarnation of the *Imitation*.

IV

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ‘IMITATION’

Thomas a Kempis was a priest ; he was a monk ; he was also, in some sense, a mystic.

He was a priest of the fifteenth century. As such he wrote the third book of the *Imitation*, and as such he believed and practised all that the

Western Church of that day required of her sons. Everything that the reformers called into question is to be found in his writings. He availed himself of an Indulgence ; he held the scholastic doctrine of Transubstantiation ; he speaks without a shadow of misgiving of the adoration of saints, Masses for the dead, lay communion in one kind, auricular confession, penance. He did not permit himself to question. ‘Blessed,’ he says, ‘is the simplicity, which leaves the difficult ways of dispute : and goes forward in the plain and solid path of God’s Commandments.’

To him the whole mediæval system, just as it stood, was God’s command. One so gentle and so meek could hardly have been a persecutor under any circumstances. At least we would fain believe so. Yet his phrase, *Beata Simplicitas*, was written not far from the year 1416 in which Huss was burned alive at Constance. There is a story that an old woman busied herself with heaping up fagots round the stake. *O sancta simplicitas*, said the dying martyr.

What line a Kempis would have taken, if his lot had fallen in the days of Luther, it is impossible to say. The corruptions and disasters of his time awoke in him neither indignation nor

despondency. He touches with gentle regret on the troubles of Emperor and Pope, on the decay of monastic life, on the greediness of the clergy, who ran about after benefices to the neglect of their own souls, on the folly of pilgrimages, but he saw no evil which the pious soul could not mend for itself at once by retiring into Christ. If the storm had broken in his lifetime, would he have followed Melanchthon or Erasmus? Probably he would have died in his cowl like Staupitz, at once attracted by Luther and repelled, driven more deeply into the recesses of his own spirit by confusions to which he could see no end. Men like a Kempis are the Falklands of the spiritual commonwealth. They are children of peace, and cannot guide the whirlwind.

He was also a monk in the declining days of monasticism, when the convent was no longer the nursery of all art and science, of all learning, and the best statesmanship, but had become once more, what at first it was intended to be, simply the home of self-denial and contemplation. Now that all other fields of energy were closed to him, the monk was bound to realise his one ideal or perish. If he was not called and chosen for the cloister, he was indeed in evil case. But the

convent gate could not shut out nature, and there were many who regretted the world which they had too hastily left.

Thomas speaks of brethren walking disorderly, but he makes no complaint of profligacy. What we discern in his pages is the intolerable littleness of the monastic life, the idleness, the gossip, the desire to get outside the walls on any pretext, the making of great secrets out of nothing, the querulousness and petty cabals and rebellions. Few were as good and pure as they had been at the beginning of their conversion. Even the best men suffered heavily from the constant spiritual strain. All the troubles of the world the monk had put behind him ; by renouncing its toils and its chances he had escaped its sorrows, but only to find that all life's bitterness was concentrated in one black drop which he called by the name of Accidie, sadness, tedium, fatigue, coldness, dryness of spirit.

These words are always recurring in the *Imitation*, and we can understand them only by calling up the idea of the monastic life. The one and only joy of the recluse, for which he had sacrificed all that other men held dear, was spiritual communion. To feel his heart enlarged by the sweet

rapture of divine love—this was his constant hope by day and night, for this he macerated his flesh, spent long hours before the altar, imprisoned himself alone in his cell. There were moments when Paradise opened before his gaze, but there were also times when everything seemed to fret and aggravate, when the heavens were as brass, and life a hill of sand.

All Christians find the same trial, but there are many ways of escape ; the charities of family and social life hang round us, and pour their balm into the weary spirit. But the monk had no such comfort. In his dark hour there was none to protect him against doubt and despair. All he could do was to wait, fearfully watching the abyss of his own spirit, till the cloud rolled away and light returned. This is why the mystic teachers dwell so much on Disinterested Love, on ‘serving God for nought.’ The true lover asks for no reward, not even for the presence of his Beloved.

It has sometimes been urged that the monastic ideal, as we find it depicted in the *Imitation*, is only a highly-refined selfishness. If this were true, we should be forced to condemn many noble lives.

But there is much to be said on the other side.

The monastic ideal differed greatly. Some orders, as the Carthusian, were much more ascetic, contemplative, unproductive, than the Benedictine or the Augustinian. But, generally speaking, a great monastery was like a great college, and teemed with the most varied activities. The whole of the book trade was carried on there, and within its walls were to be found musicians, artists, medical men, architects, statesmen, historians, poets, schoolmasters, at a time when these arts did not and could not exist anywhere else. All the industries connected with the management of land were pursued there with system and intelligence. Even in the later days of the new orders, when a man put on the cowl, he found ready to his hand a wider sphere of usefulness than he could easily have discovered in secular life.

Contemplation was by no means the only duty of the monk, though it was above all others. But what are we to say of the contemplative life in itself? Is it selfish to desire the vision of God above all things, and to make it the chief object of pursuit?

The question hinges mainly on two points. The monk cut himself loose from all ties of ordinary human affection. He left behind him

father and mother, brother and sister, and he refused to marry. So do thousands of others ; so do soldiers and sailors, and sons who go to seek their fortunes in the colonies. But the monk went farther than this. His eyes were fixed on the kingdom of heaven, where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. He held that love is of God, and that we should love one another as children of God, and for no other reason. Let us listen to what a Kempis says—‘ Above all therefore that be dear : let Jesus alone be specially beloved. Love all for Jesus : but Jesus for Himself. Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved ; for this is for God alone : who hath none like unto Himself. Neither do thou desire that the heart of any should be set on thee ; nor do thou set thy heart on the love of any : but let Jesus be in thee and in every good man.’

Thomas himself was loving and beloved, nor was he by any means insensible to the ties of blood, for he waited with great devotion on the last sickness of his brother John. There is undeniably something awful in his language about love. But the question is not whether it is awful, but whether it is just. What Thomas means is

that no love can endure except in so far as it is built upon the Eternal. It is difficult to deny this.

The second point is, that all men fortunately are not alike. Most Englishmen probably agree with Milton in his disparagement of 'cloistered virtue.' We are a pugnacious not a mystical race, disciples of Hobbes and of Locke, and we are inclined to regard the contemplative as an athlete who has slunk out of the arena, and professes to despise the crown which he had no chance of winning. We suffer the artist and the student to exist, but on condition that they make a name, and also make money.

The contemplative was a student, an artist, a devotee of the true, the beautiful, and the good, who made no money. Sometimes he did useful work—let us remember the Bible which Thomas copied out in his exquisite handwriting in four large volumes, or the school at Herzogenbusch with its twelve hundred pupils. He preached zealously, and he organised in his own way. But he did not attend committees, nor mount platforms, nor meddle with politics, nor seek preferment, nor beat the drum. Or, to put the matter less invidiously, his one study was to get close to

God, and to persuade others to do the same. He would persuade with infinite patience, but he would not contend, because he believed that 'the Truth speaketh inwardly without noise of words.'

Certainly the world would have been poorer without the *Imitation*, and there is still room for such lives as that of a Kempis. It is not the life for everybody, but our Lord Himself taught us the two great lessons of Vicarious Suffering and Vicarious Faith. Men are bound together in this world in very singular ways, by their needs, by their weakness. They all suffer for one another, and they also believe for one another, and know for one another.

Life is so constituted that we need reservoirs of every kind of excellence, of intelligence, of knowledge, of practical ability, of morality. No man is sufficient for himself. At every turn he must borrow, and he must lend.

The contemplative life is such a reservoir, a storage-ground of moral force. It is the nursery in especial of two great graces, Humility and Purity, neither being easy of attainment in the struggle of the world. Excellence in any function is purchased by stinting other functions, and no doubt there is a certain loss in all secluded lives.

The torch burns itself away, but it gives light ; the flower wastes the plant, but it is a flower. The individual loses, but the community gains, and the community can repay what the individual has sacrificed.

It is really waste of time to ask whether the contemplative life is better than the practical, or the practical than the contemplative. God made them both. Even Milton discovered that 'they also serve who only stand and wait.'

Both these characteristics, the priestly and the monastic, tend rather to limit the flow of our sympathy. How then are we to account for the vast popularity of the *Imitation* ? More than three thousand editions of the book are known to exist. It has been translated into every civilised language, and many barbarous dialects. Even the negro has his version. It has been said with truth that no book except the Bible has been so widely read.

The reason is to be found in two graces that Thomas had laboured for, in Purity and Simplicity, and in two that had come unsolicited, in Beauty and Dignity. He was simple, and he dipped his pen in simplicity. The character is not portrayed, but reveals itself. We see a white soul.

But Simplicity and Purity are the 'two wings' on which a man is lifted up from earth. 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' He is invested with something of the beauty and the dignity of the Eternal Spirit before which he bows. He finds not only wisdom and strength, but that art which alone is universal and imperishable, which flows from the Ideal, and is given only to those who surrender themselves to the Ideal.

We must not attempt to analyse the *Imitation*. The religion of the heart is impatient of logical categories. But, as Thomas has been usually ranked among the semi-mystics, some endeavour should be made to explain what this means.

The perfect Mystic is one who relies upon the Inner Light and shuts his eyes to facts. He speaks commonly of the 'divine intoxication,' and in truth he is as one full of heady wine. This world, this world of differences, has for him no meaning at all, no lesson and no restraint.

The half Mystic also believes that the soul has an eye and an ear for communing with God. But he holds that the inner light is not equally nor always given to all men, that it is kindled by the divine grace, by means of strong

discipline, in a society. From this point of view the world is far from unmeaning ; it is a sacrament, and its differences are the steps in Jacob's ladder. 'If thy heart were right ; then every creature would be unto thee a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine.'

Semi-mysticism is in fact a name for that type of religion which believes in personal inspiration, yet stands between pure idealism on the one side and mere induction on the other. Between the two extremes of Mysticism and Empiricism, there are infinite niceties of shade and gradation. We distinguish them by their bearing on reality, on the facts of life.

There are several points at which we may apply this test to the *Imitation*.

The perfect Mystic always ends by sinking his own existence in the Eternal One. Thomas believed that even in heaven he should still retain his individuality. 'Good Jesus,' he cries, 'when shall I stand to see Thee, when shall I contemplate the glory of Thy kingdom ?' Closely connected with this thought is the insistence with which he dwells upon the Cross, the great safeguard of personality. The true Mystic thinks solely or mainly of the Incarnation.

The keynote of the *Imitation* is Peace. The Mystic held that perfect peace could at any moment be obtained by shutting the door upon the world. Thomas knew better. 'The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,' but 'He that knows best how to suffer: will possesss the greatest peace.' It is peace in the midst of warfare, a spot of calm in the bosom of the storm. Thomas teaches that it is within us—this is a truth well known even to heathen moralists—and that it is reached through, is in a sense made by, the storm—this is the Christian secret.

No earnest seeker after truth will be perplexed by the sharp distinction which runs through the *Imitation* between the outward and the inward. It is a book upon the Inner Way, and it teaches that the outer has no value except as it helps towards, or flows from, the presence of Christ's spirit in the heart. There were those who denied all value to forms, ceremonies, conduct, discipline. They sat still, says Ruysbroek, 'with introverted eyes,' doing nothing, thinking of nothing, waiting in a sort of stupor for the Formless Vision. Ruysbroek's own wife belonged to these Quietists, and he had been sorely plagued by her whims. There were others who placed religion in hair-

shirts, fasting and the never-ending drill of the cloistral life. Thomas values forms at their just worth. Many are easily abused and of little real help. 'Some,' he says, 'carry their devotion in their books: some in images; some in outward signs and figures.' 'Many run to distant places to visit the relics of the saints; and but little amendment is reaped thereby.' Yet for us, in this life, forms are God's ordinances, and must not be neglected. 'I must be contented in the light of true faith, and therein walk till the day of eternal brightness dawns; and the shadows of figures flee away. But when that which is perfect is come, the use of sacraments shall cease.' Yet not till then.

Three times in his life he is recorded to have seen visions. Once he was warned in a dream of the death of the Prior of Windesheim. In another dream the Virgin appeared and reproved him for neglecting her service; in another Satan came and was put to flight by the Holy Name. But he seems neither to desire nor to expect such experiences, and he knew well that for the Beatific Vision we must be content to wait, till Jesus is all in all to us. What he yearned for was Consolation; he calls it also Devotion, or Grace.

It is the sweet fervour of personal union and love, by which the heart is enlarged. He knew that this joy cannot be constant even in the greatest saints. There are times when the soul is like Kidron in summer. God sends this heavenly visitation and withdraws it as He sees best. We must not demand it. ‘Why seekest thou rest : since thou art born to labour ? Set thyself for patience, rather than for consolations ; and for carrying the Cross rather than for joy.’ He warned his novices that ‘many have been ruined by devotion,’ by the attempt, he means, to manufacture grace. There was grave need for this fatherly admonition. Thomas is always pastoral, always, that is to say, practical and real.

Another point that calls for a few words of comment is his view of knowledge.

Those who are familiar with the *Confessions* will remember how in the case of St. Augustine abstract thought went hand in hand with moral truth, how even in the Conversation at Ostia earthly science leads the saint to the foot of the ‘inner staircase,’ and Nature delivers her message before the Heavenly Voice is heard. Thomas had passed straight from the grammar-school to the cloister, and cherished a gentle

dislike for the ‘curious’ metaphysics of the Rue du Fouarre. But when he asks ‘What have we to do with *genera* and *species*?’, he cannot be altogether acquitted of ingratitude. We may allow that knowledge is a means and not the end, but it is a means, and the less we know for ourselves the more others must know for us. Thomas forgot how much he owed to Aquinas. The broad shield of the great Dominican was spread before him, and enabled him to eat his bread in peace. He took the theology, and gently blamed the strife of words without which it could not have been secured.

It is just here that he is most of a mystic. ‘Happy the man whom truth instructs by itself, not by figures and words that pass.’ ‘He to whom the Eternal Word speaks; is set free from many opinions.’ These words, if pressed, would carry us far beyond the ordinary limits of his thought. Thomas had taken Love for his teacher. But what does Love teach without intelligence?

All this is practically what we mean by the religion of the heart. We call it semi-mysticism, because, while it believes in the Inner Light, it regards this illumination as chiefly moral and

identifies it with Love. There is however also a historical reason. The *Imitation* belongs to a school of thought which may be said to begin with St. Augustine, and runs down through the French writers, St. Bernard, the Victorines, Alain de Lille, to the Germans of the fourteenth century, Tauler, Suso and Ruysbroek. In its later stages it becomes more and more of a reaction against dry scholastic logic on the one hand, and extreme mysticism on the other.

The latter was the chief danger. Those ideas of Eternity, Immanence, Unity, which to many seem so thin and unpractical, are in fact the most tremendous explosives, shaking state and church alike. In society their brood is Communism, in religion Pantheism. Both these evil spirits were abroad in France, in Germany, and even in England. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were the age of Averroism, of Joachim and his Eternal Gospel, of the Fraticelli and of the Lollards. It is noticeable that it was an age of great distress. France was devastated by the English wars, and the Turks were closing in upon Constantinople. The Black Death was raging. For the Church it was the time of the Babylonian Captivity and the great Schism, a time of extreme

corruption and grave scandal. Amidst all these disasters a new spirit was rising. Nations were shaping themselves and the vernacular literatures were beginning to bloom ; it was the period of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, of Chaucer and Piers Plowman. When a Kempis died the Renaissance was close at hand.

At such times revolt is in the air, and revolt is always metaphysical or mystical. The danger was averted in municipal life by force of arms, in the schools by the strong theology of Aquinas, in the Church at large perhaps chiefly by the semi-mystics, who showed once more how metaphysics may be reconciled to life, not by sweeping away all differences in a flood, but by harmonising them through self-denial and Christian charity. After the wind, the fire and the earthquake, comes the still small voice. Religion falls back upon the heart. This was in fact the position of a Kempis. He had seen Pantheism close at hand in Eckhart and in the Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit.

Enough has been said to explain the general meaning of the *Imitation*, and beyond this it is needless to extend these comments on the book. As the manna was said to cause in each man's mouth the flavour of the meat he loved best, so

all great masterpieces speak with different voices to different hearts. In them deep calls to deep, and no stranger can intervene. Yet a final word may be permitted about one curious influence of the *Imitation* on modern thought.

It is not in any way surprising that such men as Luther, Wesley, Johnson, Chalmers, de Lamartine, Ampère, Leibnitz, should have loved the *Imitation*, or that General Gordon, the soldier mystic, should have carried it about with him. Lamennais said that 'the *Imitation* has made more saints than all the books of controversy . . . One would almost imagine that it was written by one of those pure spirits who have seen God face to face.' Even Zwinglians find edification even in the book on Holy Communion. The teaching of a Kempis rises above the low hills by which all our controversies are bounded, and speaks to the universal heart of Christendom.

But how singular that Comte, the Positivist, should have found in the *Imitation* 'one of the principal daily sources of nourishment and consolation' for his soul!

The explanation is found in the fact that there is a modern form of scientific or philosophic thought, which, while rejecting the Christian

tradition, does yet hold firmly to the solidarity of the human family. It assumes a very different practical bent according as it is built upon German metaphysics or French science. The English reader need hardly be reminded how widely Carlyle diverged from Mill on points of the deepest practical import. But if man is to be a family, whether the supreme object of our reverence is the One or Humanity, self-denial must always be a cardinal virtue. Where is it more emphatically preached than in the *Sartor Resartus*? The same thought is not less vital in the religion of Comte. All religious men, even all earnestly moral men, know that they must bear the cross. The cross is as necessary to Marcus Aurelius as to a Kempis, but they understand it in different ways, because they connect it with a different ideal.

How easily are we here reminded of that passage of the *Mill on the Floss* (Book iv. chap. 3) where George Eliot calls up the spirit of Thomas a Kempis to soothe the trouble of her wayward heroine! We all remember 'the little, old, clumsy book,' that Maggie Tulliver found on the window-shelf; 'it had the corners turned down in many places, and some hand, now for ever

quiet, had made at certain passages strong pen-and-ink marks, long since browned by time. Maggie turned from leaf to leaf and read where the quiet hand pointed.' It is a magic picture—the daughter of the nineteenth century beating her wilful little wings against the bars of her cage—the hand of some fellow-sufferer in the forgotten past stretched out from the grave in sympathy, and pointing to the old Dutch monk in his whitewashed cell.

Let us read on further. 'In the ardour of first discovery renunciation seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain. She had not perceived—how could she, until she had lived longer?—the inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings, that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly.' But is this the last word of a Kempis? Let us hear what he says himself. 'Set thyself therefore like a good and faithful servant of Christ to carry manfully the cross of thy Lord: who out of love was crucified for thee. Drink of the Lord's cup with hearty affection: if thou desire to be His friend and to have part with Him. So when we have perused and searched all be this the final conclusion. That through many

tribulations : we must enter into the Kingdom of God.'

The cross which is an abstraction has little meaning, less authority, and no comfort. Thomas never mentions the cross, except as the symbol of the Redeemer, the mark of His friends, the fountain of love and joy, and the key to the kingdom of heaven. Hence the self-denial which he teaches is not a living death, but a dying life. The final word is not death but life ; the tribulation leads to the Kingdom of God, which is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

ADDENDUM

From my kind friend the Dean of Christ Church I have received a photographic copy of a portrait preserved at Zwolle, which is supposed to represent a Kempis. The dress and accessories are very similar to those of the Gertruidenberg picture given by Mr. Wheatley, but the features are very different. The face is rounder, fuller, less delicate, but stronger ; the eyes seem to be slightly protuberant. It is a peasant's physiognomy, and suggests a florid complexion. The expression is

INTRODUCTION

contemplative, but the countenance is one that would lend itself to a kindly humour, and a Kempis is said to have been no foe to innocent mirth.

None of the existing portraits appears to be free from doubt, but some weight may be allowed to the Zwolle tradition, and readers of this edition will not be sorry to possess what at any rate may be a faithful representation of the author's features. Hence it has been judged not improper to insert it before the title-page, but with a word of caution.

FIRST BOOK

A

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HERE BEGIN
ADMONITIONS USEFUL
FOR A SPIRITUAL LIFE

[FIRST BOOK]

CHAPTER I

OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST, AND
CONTEMPT OF ALL THE VANITIES
OF THE WORLD

WHOSO followeth Me, walketh not in darkness:¹ saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ by which we are admonished, to imitate His life and manners: if we will be truly enlightened, and delivered from all blindness of heart. Be it therefore our chief pursuit: to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of Christ excels all doctrines of holy men; and whoso had the Spirit: would find therein the hidden manna.² But it happens that from often hearing many have but small desire for the Gospel: because they have not the Spirit of Christ. But whoso would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ: must endeavour to conform his whole life to Him. What doth it profit thee to lecture profoundly on the Trinity;

¹ John viii. 12.

² Apoc. ii. 17.

if thou be void of humility and thereby displeasing to the Trinity? Truly profound words do not make a man holy and just: but a virtuous life makes him dear to God. I had rather feel compunction: than know its definition. If thou knewst the whole Bible in the letter¹ and the sayings of all philosophers; what would all that profit thee without the love of God and grace?

Vanity of vanities and all is vanity: except to love God and to serve Him only.² This is the highest wisdom: through contempt of the world to journey towards the Kingdom of Heaven. Vanity therefore it is to seek after perishing riches: and to trust in them. Vanity is it also to solicit honours: and climb to high degree. Vanity it is to follow the desires of the flesh: and to desire that for which thou must afterwards be heavily punished. Vanity it is to covet a long life: and neglect a good life. Vanity it is to mind only the present life: and not foresee those things which are to come. Vanity it is to set thy heart on that which speedily passes away:

¹ *Exterius*, that is *outwardly*, *in the letter*, not in the spirit. Hirsche translates this word *by heart*, and treats it as a barbarism for the German *auswendig* or the Flemish *van buiten*. But *exterius* with its cognates is so commonly used in the *De Imitatione* in its proper sense that this can hardly be the case. *Discere exterius*, which Hirsche quotes from Florentius, may mean *to learn aloud*, *by oral repetition*, as *legere exterius*, which he also quotes, means *to read aloud*.

² Eccl. i. 2: Deut. vi. 13.

and not hasten thither where everlasting joy abides.

Call often to mind the proverb; The eye is not satisfied with seeing: nor the ear filled with hearing.¹ Study therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of the visible: and to give thyself over to the invisible. For they that follow their appetites stain their conscience: and forfeit the grace of God.

CHAPTER II

OF THE HUMBLE CONCEIT OF OURSELVES

EVERY man naturally desires to know;² but what avails knowledge without the fear of God? Better surely is a humble peasant that serves God: than a proud philosopher that studies the course of heaven and neglects himself. Whoso knows himself well grows meaner in his own eyes: and delights not in the praises of men. If I understood all things in the world, and were not in charity;³ what would it help me in the sight of God who will judge me according to my deeds?

Cease from an inordinate desire of knowledge: for therein is found great distraction and deceit. Gladly would those who know seem learned and be called wise. There be many things: which

¹ Eccl. i. 8.

² Aristotle, *Met.* i. 1.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

to know doth little or nothing profit the soul. And he is very foolish : that is intent upon other things, than those that may avail him for his salvation. Many words do not satisfy the soul ; but a good life refreshes the mind : and a pure conscience, gives great assurance in the sight of God. The more and the better thou knowest : the more severely shalt thou therefore be judged unless thy life be also more holy. Be not therefore vain of any art or science ; but rather fear for the knowledge that is given thee.

If thou thinkest that thou knowest much and understandest well : know also that there be many things more which thou knowest not. Be not overwise :¹ but rather confess thine ignorance. Why wilt thou prefer thyself before any ; since there be many more learned than thou, and more skilful in the Law ? If thou wilt know or learn any thing to profit : love to be unknown and to be little esteemed.²

This is the deepest and most profitable reading : the true knowledge and contempt of ourselves. To make no account of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others : is great wisdom

¹ Rom. xi. 20.

² *Ama nesciri* is from St. Bernard i. 782 of Mabillon's ed. It was a favourite phrase among the Brethren of the Common Life. Hirsche notes that the whole sentence, *ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*, is found in another work of a Kempis, *The Little Alphabet of a Monk*.

and perfection. If thou shouldest see another openly sin, or commit some heinous offence; yet oughtest thou not to think the better of thyself: for thou knowest not how long thou shalt be able to stand fast in good. We all are frail: but thou shalt esteem none frailer than thyself.

CHAPTER III

OF THE DOCTRINE OF TRUTH

I

HAPPY the man whom truth teaches by itself,¹ not by fleeting figures and words: but as it is in itself. Our opinion and our sense often deceive us: and see but little. What profit is there in lengthy quibbling about dark and hidden things; when we shall not be reproved at the day of judgment because we knew them not? It is great folly to neglect things that are profitable and necessary: and take needless pains for that which is far-fetched and hurtful. We have eyes and see not;² and what have we to do with genera and species?

He to whom the Eternal Word speaks: is freed from many opinions. From one Word are all things; and all speak that one: and this is the Beginning, which also speaks to us.³ No man

¹ See the *Confessions* of St. Augustine ix. 10, 3.

² Jer. v. 21: Matt. xiii. 13: John xii. 40. ³ John i. 1: viii. 25.

without that Word understands, or judges aright. He to whom all things are one, he who draws all things to one, and sees all things in one; may be stablished in heart: and rest as a peacemaker in God. O God who art Truth: make me one with Thee in everlasting charity. It wearies me often to read and hear many things: in Thee is all that I want and desire. Let all doctors hold their peace let all creatures keep silence in Thy sight: speak thou alone to me.

II

The more a man is made one with himself and simplified inwardly; the more and higher things he understands without labour: for he receives the light of intelligence from above. A pure simple and stable spirit does not waste its force on many occupations; for it does all to the honour of God: and strives to be at peace within itself from every selfish aim. Who hinders and troubles thee more; than the unmortified affection of thine own heart? A good and devout man first plans within himself: those things which he is to do outwardly. Neither do they warp him to the desires of a vicious inclination: but he bends them himself to fit the prescript of right reason. Who hath a harder battle; than he that strives to overcome himself? And this should be our business, to conquer ourselves; and daily

wax stronger than ourselves: and make some growth in holiness.

III

All perfection in this life, hath some imperfection cleaving to it: and no speculation of ours is without some darkness. An humble knowledge of thyself, is a surer way to God: than a deep search after learning. Learning is not to be blamed, nor any simple knowledge of things, for considered in itself it is good and ordained by God: but a good conscience and a virtuous life is always to be preferred. But because many are more anxious to know than to live well; therefore they are often deceived: and bear little fruit or next to none.

O if men bestowed as much labour on rooting out vices and grafting virtues as they do in debating quillets; there would not be such evils and scandals among the people; nor such looseness in Religious Houses. Truly when the day of judgment comes we shall not be asked what we have read but what we have done; nor how well we have spoken; but how religiously we have lived. Tell me where now are all those Doctors and Masters with whom thou wast well acquainted whilst as yet they lived, and flourished in learning? Now others possess their livings: and perhaps never think of them. In their life-

time they seemed to be something: and now they are not spoken of. O how quickly passes the glory of the world. O that their life had been answerable to their learning: then had their study and reading been to good purpose. How many perish through vain learning in this world: who take little care of the service of God. And because they rather love to be great than humble: therefore they become vain in their imaginations.¹

He is truly great: that hath great charity. He is truly great: that is little in himself, and makes no account of any height of honour. He is truly prudent: that regards all earthly things as dung, that he may gain Christ.² And he is truly learned: that does the will of God, and forsakes his own will.

CHAPTER IV

OF PRUDENCE IN OUR ACTIONS

WE should not give ear to every word or impulse:³ but warily and leisurely ponder things according to God. But alas we often believe and speak evil of others rather than good: so weak we are. But the perfect man does not lightly give credit to every speaker; for he knows that human frailty is prone to evil: and very apt to slip in words.

¹ Rom. i. 21.

² Phil. iii. 8.

³ Ecclesiasticus xix. 16.

It is great wisdom, not to be headlong in thy affairs : nor to stand stiffly in thine own conceits. As also not to believe every thing which thou hearest : nor presently to pour into the ears¹ of others what thou hast heard or dost believe.

Take counsel with a wise and conscientious man ; and seek to be instructed by a better than thyself : rather than to follow thine own inventions. A good life makes a man wise according to God : and expert in many things. The more humble a man is in himself and the more subject unto God : the wiser and quieter shall he be in all his affairs.

CHAPTER V

OF THE READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURES

TRUTH is to be sought for in Holy Scripture: not eloquence. All Holy Scripture is to be read in the same Spirit wherewith it was written.¹ We should search for profit in the Scriptures : rather than subtlety of speech.

We ought as willingly to read devout and simple books : as deep and profound. Let not the authority of the writer move thee, whether he be of small or great learning : but let the love of

¹ From an Epistle of William, Abbot of St. Theoderic (in St. Bernard ii. 214): *Quo enim spiritu scripturae factae sunt, eo spiritu legi desiderant.* H.

pure truth draw thee to read. Search not who said this: but mark what is said. Men pass: but the truth of the Lord abideth for ever.¹ God speaks unto us in sundry ways, without respect of persons.²

Our own curiosity often hampers us in reading the Scriptures: for we stop to understand and discuss where we should simply pass on. If thou wish to drink profit; read with humility, simplicity and faith: nor ever desire the name of learning. Enquire willingly; and hear in silence the words of holy men: mislike not the parables of the Elders, for they are not uttered without cause.³

CHAPTER VI

OF INORDINATE AFFECTIONS

WHENSOEVER a man desireth anything inordinately: he is presently disquieted in himself. The proud and covetous can never rest: the poor and humble in spirit walk in a multitude of peace. The man that is not yet perfectly dead to himself, is quickly tempted: and is overcome in small and trifling things. The weak in spirit and he that is yet in a manner carnal and inclined to sensible things: can hardly withdraw himself altogether from earthly desires. And

¹ Psal. cxvii. (cxvi.) 2.

² Rom. ii. 11: Heb. i. 1.

³ Prov. i. 6: Ecclesiasticus xxxii. 12, 13.

therefore he is often afflicted when he would withdraw himself: and is easily made angry if any one thwart his wish.

And if he has attained his desire; he is presently disquieted by guilt of conscience, for that he followed his passion: which helps him nothing towards the peace he sought for. Therefore by resisting passions is found true peace of heart: not by obeying them. There is then no peace in the heart of a carnal man; nor in him that is given up to outward things: but in the fervent and the spiritual.

CHAPTER VII

OF FLYING FROM VAIN HOPE AND PRIDE

HE is vain: that setteth his hope in man or in creatures. Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ: nor to seem poor in this world. Stand not upon thyself: but place thy hope in God. Do what lieth in thy power: and God will help thy good will. Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the cunning of any living man; but rather in the grace of God: who helpeth the humble and humbleth the presumptuous.

Glory not in wealth if thou have it; nor in friends because powerful: but in God who gives all things, and above all desires to give thee Him-

self. Extol not thyself for the stature or beauty of thy person: which by a touch of sickness is spoiled and marred. Delight not in thy cleverness or wit; lest thou displease God: from whom comes all the good thou hast by nature.¹ Think not thyself better than others; lest perhaps thou be accounted worse in the sight of God: who knows what is in man.

Be not proud of well-doing; for the judgment of God is other than the judgment of men: and that offends Him which pleases man. If thou hast any good; believe better things of others: that thou mayest preserve humility. It hurts not to debase thyself under all men: but it hurts much, to prefer thyself even to one.² Unfailing peace is with the humble: but in the heart of the proud is envy and frequent indignation.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT TOO MUCH FAMILIARITY IS TO BE SHUNNED

LAY not thy heart open to every man: but plead thy cause with the wise and such as fear God.³ Be not much with young people and

¹ Jer. ix. 23, 24: 1 Cor. i. 31: 2 Cor. x. 17.

² The thought may be suggested by St. Bernard in *Cant. serm. 37* (i. 1403). H.

³ Ecclesiasticus viii. 22.

strangers. With the rich use not flattery: and before great personages be not eager to appear. Keep company with the humble and simple, with the devout and virtuous: and commune with them of those things that may edify. Be not familiar with any woman: but in general commend all good women to God. Desire to be familiar with God alone and his Angels: and avoid the acquaintance of men. We must have charity towards all: but familiarity is not expedient.

Sometimes it happens that a person unknown shines in good reputation: whose presence notwithstanding darkens the eyes of the beholders. We think sometimes to please others by our company: and we rather begin to offend them by bad qualities which they discover in us.

CHAPTER IX

OF OBEDIENCE AND SUBJECTION

IT is a great matter to stand in obedience; to live under a prelate: and not to be our own masters. It is much safer to stand in subjection: than in office. Many are under obedience rather for necessity than for charity; and they have their punishment: and do easily repine. Neither will they attain to freedom of mind: unless with their

whole heart they obey for the love of God. Run hither and thither: thou shalt find no rest but in humble subjection, under the rule of a prelate. Fancifulness and change of place, have deceived many.

True it is that every one cheerfully does what he likes: and inclines to those who agree with him. But if God be amongst us: we must sometimes give up our own opinion for the good of peace. Who is so wise; that he can fully know all things? Be not therefore too confident in thine own opinion: but be even glad to listen to the thought of others. If that which thou thinkest be good; and yet thou renounce it for God's sake and follow another: thou shalt make more profit thereby.

For I have often heard: that it is safer to hear, and to take counsel than to give it. It may also fall out, that each one's opinion may be good; but to refuse to yield to others, when reason or a cause requires it: is a sign of pride and obstinacy.

CHAPTER X

OF AVOIDING SUPERFLUITY IN WORDS.

AVOID the tumult of men as much as thou canst ; for talk about worldly events is a great hindrance, although they be spoken of with sincere intention. For we are quickly stained and captured by vanity.

Often I could wish that I had held my peace : and that I had not been in company. But why do we so willingly talk and gossip together ; when yet we seldom return to silence without hurt of conscience ? Therefore do we so willingly talk ; because by mutual speech we seek mutual comfort : and desire to ease the heart overwearied with manifold anxieties. And of those things which we most love or desire, or of those which we feel contrary to us : we very gladly talk and think. But alas often in vain and to no end. For this outward comfort : is no small loss of inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray :¹ lest our time pass idly. If it be lawful and expedient to speak : speak those things that may edify. Evil habit and neglect of our own progress : conduce greatly to unguarded speech. Yet our spiritual progress is not a little helped, by devout com-

¹ Mark xiv. 38.

muning of spiritual things : especially when men of like mind and spirit be met together in God.

CHAPTER XI

OF THE OBTAINING OF PEACE AND ZEALOUS DESIRE OF PROGRESS

WE might enjoy much peace : if we would not busy ourselves with the words and deeds of other men which appertain not to our charge. How can he abide long in peace ; who thrusts himself into the cares of others, who seeks occasions abroad, who little or seldom collects himself within ? Blessed are the simple : for they shall have much peace.

Why were some of the Saints so perfect and contemplative ? Because they laboured to mortify themselves wholly from all earthly desires : and therefore they could with the whole marrow of their heart cleave to God, and be free for their own concerns. We are too much occupied by our passions : and too anxious about transitory things. We also seldom overcome any one vice perfectly ; and do not burn for daily progress : therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

If we were perfectly dead unto ourselves, and not entangled within ; then should we be able also to relish divine things : and have some experience of heavenly contemplation. The greatest and indeed the whole hindrance is, that we are not free

from our passions and lusts : neither do we try to enter into the perfect path of the Saints. Also when any small adversity befalls us, we are too quickly cast down : and turn to human comforts.

If we would strive like brave men to stand in the battle : surely we should see the help of the Lord come upon us from Heaven.¹ For He is ready to succour those that strive and trust in His grace : who giveth us occasion to fight in order that we may conquer.

If we esteem our progress in religion to consist only in these outward observances : our devotion will quickly come to an end. But let us lay the axe to the root :² that being cleansed from passions we may find a mind that makes peace. If every year we would root out one vice : we should soon become perfect men. But as it is on the contrary we often see ; that we were better and purer at the beginning of our conversion : than after many years of profession. Our fervour and progress should grow daily : but now it is accounted a great matter : if a man can retain a part of his first zeal. If we would force ourselves a little at the beginning : then should we be able to perform all things afterwards with ease and delight. It is a hard matter to break off habits : but it is harder to go against our own will. But if thou canst not overcome little and easy things ; when wilt thou over-

¹ Eph. vi. 13 : Psal. cxxi. (cxx.) 1, 2.

² Luke iii. 9.

come harder things? Resist thy inclination in the beginning; and unlearn evil custom: lest perhaps by little and little it draw thee into greater difficulty.

O if thou didst but mark how much peace unto thyself and joy unto others thou shouldest procure by behaving thyself well: I think thou wouldest be more careful of thy spiritual progress.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE GOOD OF ADVERSITY

IT is good that we have sometimes some troubles and crosses: for they often call a man back to his heart; that he may know himself to be in exile: and not place his hope in any worldly thing. It is good that we be sometimes contradicted and that men think ill or doubtfully of us: although we do and intend well. These things help often towards humility: and defend us from vain glory. For then we better seek God our inward witness; when outwardly we be contemned by men: and there is no credit given unto us.

Therefore a man should settle himself so firmly in God: that he need not seek many comforts of men. When a man of good will¹ is afflicted or tempted, or troubled with evil thoughts; then he understands better the great need he has of God: without whom he perceives he can do nothing that is good. Then also he sorrows laments and prays,

¹ Luke ii. 14.

for the miseries he suffers. Then is he weary of living longer ; and wishes that death would come : that he might be dissolved and be with Christ.¹ Then also he well perceives : that perfect security and full peace cannot endure in this world.

CHAPTER XIII OF RESISTING TEMPTATION

SO long as we live in the world : we cannot be without tribulation and temptation. Whence it is written in Job. The life of man upon earth is a temptation.² Every one therefore ought to be anxious about his temptations and watch in prayer ;³ lest the devil find room to deceive him : who never sleeps, but goes about seeking whom he may devour.⁴ No man is so perfect and holy, as not sometimes to feel temptations : and altogether without them we cannot be.

Nevertheless temptations are often very profitable to us ; though they be troublesome and grievous : for in them a man is humbled, purified and instructed. All the Saints passed through many tribulations and temptations and profited thereby. And they that could not bear temptations : became reprobate and fell away.

There is no order so holy nor place so secret :

¹ Phil. i. 23. ² Job vii. 1, according to the reading of the LXX.

³ 1 Pet. iv. 7.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 8.

where there be not temptations or adversities. There is no man that is altogether safe from temptations whilst he lives ; for in ourselves is the root thereof : since we were born in concupiscence. As one temptation or tribulation goes away another comes in its place ; and we shall ever have something to suffer : because we have lost the blessing of our felicity.

Many seek to shun temptations : and fall more grievously into them. By flight alone we cannot overcome : but by patience and true humility we become stronger than all our enemies. He that only avoideth them outwardly, and doth not pluck up the root : shall profit little. Yea temptations will the sooner return unto him : and he shall feel himself in worse case. By little and little, and by patience with long-suffering through God's help thou shalt better overcome : than by hardness and thine own pertinacity. Often take counsel in temptation ; and deal not roughly with him that is tempted : but give him comfort, as thou wouldest wish to be done to thyself.¹

The beginning of all evil temptations is inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God ; for as a ship without a rudder is tossed to and fro by the waves: so the man who is slack and quits his purpose is many ways tempted.

¹ Opposite to this tender pastoral advice John Dygon writes in the margin of the Magdalen MS.: *Nota nota bene.*

Fire tries iron : and temptation a just man. We often know not what we can do : but temptation shews us what we are. Yet we must be watchful especially in the beginning of temptation ; for the enemy is then more easily beaten, if he be not suffered to enter the door of the mind : but be met on the threshold at his first knock. Wherefore one said. Withstand beginnings : a remedy comes too late.¹ For first there comes to the mind a bare thought ; then a strong imagination : afterwards delight and an evil motion and consent. And so by little and little our wicked enemy gets wholly in : because he is not resisted in the beginning. And the longer a man is too sluggish to resist ; the weaker does he daily become in himself : and the enemy stronger against him.

Some suffer greater temptations in the beginning of their conversion : others in the end. Others again are much troubled almost through the whole of their life ; some are but easily tempted : according to the wisdom and equity of the Divine appointment ; which weighs the state and deserts of men : and foreordains all things for the salvation of His elect. Therefore we ought not to despair when we are tempted ; but the more fervently to beseech God : that He will vouchsafe to help us in all tribulations ; who surely according to the words of Paul will make with

¹ Ovid, *de Rem. Am.* 91.

the temptation a way of escape : that we may be able to bear it.¹ Let us therefore humble our souls under the hand of God in every temptation and tribulation : for the humble in spirit He will save and exalt.²

In temptations and afflictions a man is proved how much progress he hath made ; and his merit is therein the greater : and his virtue is more clearly manifest. Neither is it a great thing if a man be devout and fervent when he feels no pressure ; but if in time of adversity he bear himself patiently : there is hope of great progress. Some are kept from great temptations, and in small daily ones are often overcome ; that they may be humbled, and never trust themselves in great matters : who break down in such trifles.

CHAPTER XIV OF AVOIDING RASH JUDGMENT

TURN thine eyes upon thyself : and beware thou judge not the actions of others.³ In judging of others a man labours in vain ; often errs and easily sins : but in judging and examining himself he always labours fruitfully.

We often judge of things, according as we like them : for we easily lose truth of judgment

¹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

² 1 Pet. v. 5, 6.

³ Matt. vii. 1.

through private inclination. If God were always the pure object of our desire: we should not be so easily troubled through the resistance of our feelings. But often something lurks within, or even concurs from without: which draws us also outwards. Many secretly seek themselves in what they do: and know it not. They seem also to live in good peace: when things fall out according to their will and fancy. But if things happen otherwise than they desire: they are straightway vexed and dispirited.

Through diversity of feelings and ideas dissensions often arise between friends and countrymen: between the religious and the devout. An ancient custom is hard to break: and no one is willing to be led farther than himself can see. If thou dost lean more on thine own reason or industry, than on the power of Jesus Christ which brings thee into subjection; seldom and slowly wilt thou become enlightened: for God wills us to be perfectly subject unto Himself, and to be lifted above all reason by the fire of love.

CHAPTER XV

OF WORKS DONE IN CHARITY

FOR no worldly thing, nor for the love of any man is any evil to be done; yet for the profit of one that is in need, a good work is

sometimes to be broken off without any scruple: or say rather changed for a better. For by doing this a good work is not lost: but changed into a better.

Without charity the outward work profits not at all;¹ but whatever is done of charity be it never so little and despised: becomes wholly fruitful. For God weighs rather the means of the worker: than the work that he does. He does much: that loves much. He does much: that does a thing well. He does well: that serves the community rather than his own will.

Oftentimes it seems to be charity, and is rather carnality: because natural inclination, self-will, hope of requital, desire of gain, will seldom be away. He that has true and perfect charity seeks himself in nothing:² but only desires in all things that God alone should be glorified. He also enviieth none, because he loves no private joy; neither will he rejoice in himself: but wishes above all blessings to be made happy in God. To no man does he attribute anything that is good; but refers it all unto God, from whom as Fountain all things flow: in whom as End all the saints do rest in fruition.

O he that had but a spark of true charity: would certainly feel that all earthly things are full of vanity.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

CHAPTER XVI

OF BEARING WITH THE DEFECTS
OF OTHERS

THOSE things that a man cannot amend in himself or in others : he ought to suffer patiently, till God order otherwise. Think that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and patience : without which all our merits have little weight. Thou oughtest to pray notwithstanding over such hindrances : that God would vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them kindly.

If one that is once or twice warned will not listen : contend not with him, but commit all to God ; that in all His servants His will may be done and his name honoured : who well knows how to turn evil into good.

Endeavour to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others of what sort soever they be : for thou also hast many which must be borne with by others. If thou canst not make thyself what thou wouldest, how canst thou expect to have another to thy liking ? We are glad to see others perfect : and yet we mend not our own faults. We will have others severely corrected : and will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us : and yet we will not have our own desires denied us. We will have others restrained by laws : but will not

in any way be checked ourselves. And thus it appears : how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all men were perfect ; what should we have to suffer from others for God's sake ? But now God hath so ordered it, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens ;¹ for no man is without fault, no man without his burden : no man sufficient for himself, no man wise enough for himself ;² but we ought to bear with one another, comfort one another : help, instruct and admonish one another.

How much virtue a man has, is best seen on occasion of adversity. For occasions do not make a man frail : but they shew, what he is.

CHAPTER XVII OF THE MONASTIC LIFE

THOU must learn to break thyself in many things : if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to dwell in a monastery or congregation, and to walk therein without complaint :³ and persevere faithfully unto death.⁴ Blessed is he that has there lived well : and ended happily. If thou wilt stand and grow as thou

¹ Gal. vi. 2.

² Ecclesiasticus xi. 26 : Prov. iii. 7.

³ *Sine querela*, Phil. iii. 6 (Vulgate).

⁴ Apoc. ii. 10.

shouldest: bear thyself as an exile and pilgrim upon earth.¹ Thou must become a fool for Christ's sake:² if thou desire to lead a religious life. The habit and the shaven crown do little profit: but change of manners and perfect mortification of passions make a true religious man.

He that seeks ought else but simply God, and the salvation of his soul: shall find nothing but tribulation and sorrow. Neither can he long remain a peacemaker: that labours not to be the least, and subject unto all. Thou camest to serve: not to govern. Know that thou wast called to suffer and to labour: not to be idle nor to gossip. Here therefore men are proved: as gold in the furnace.³ Here no man can stand: unless with his whole heart he humble himself for the love of God.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF THE EXAMPLES OF THE HOLY FATHERS

I

CONSIDER the lively examples of the holy Fathers, in whom true perfection and religion shined: and thou shalt see how little it

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 15: Psal. xxxix. 12 (xxxviii. 13): 1 Pet. ii. 11.

² 1 Cor. iv. 10.

³ Wisdom iii. 6.

is, and almost nothing that we do. Alas what is our life ; if it be compared to them ?

The Saints and friends of Christ, served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness ;¹ in labour and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations : in many persecutions and reproaches.

O how many and grievous tribulations they suffered, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors Virgins : and all the rest, that willed to follow the steps of Christ. For they hated their lives in this world : that they might keep them unto life eternal.² O how strict and renounced a life the holy Fathers led in the wilderness : how long and grievous were the temptations they suffered ; how often were they assaulted by the enemy, what frequent and fervent prayers offered they to God : what rigorous abstinences did they use. What zeal and fervour had they for spiritual progress ; how stout a conflict did they wage for the overcoming of their lusts : how pure and upright an intention kept they towards God.

All day they laboured, and in the night they found time for long prayer : although while they laboured they ceased not from mental prayer. They spent all their time with profit : every hour seemed short for waiting upon God : and by reason of the great sweetness of contemplation,

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 27 : xii. 10.

² John xii. 25.

they forgot the necessity of bodily refreshments. All riches, dignities, honours friends and kinsfolk they renounced: they desired to have nothing from the world; they scarce took the necessaries of life: they grieved to serve their bodies even in necessity.

Therefore they were poor in earthly things: but very rich in grace and virtues. Outwardly they were destitute: but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation. They were strangers to the world: but near and familiar friends to God. They seemed to themselves as naught, and to this present world as desppicable: but in the eyes of God they were precious and beloved. They stood in true humility: lived in simple obedience. They walked in love and patience; and therefore they grew daily in the Spirit: and obtained great grace in God's sight. They were given for an example to all religious; and more should they incite us to good progress: than the multitude of the lukewarm to slackness.

II

O how great was the fervour of all religious, in the beginning of their holy institution. O how great was their devotion in prayer, their emulation in virtue; what discipline was enforced: what reverence and obedience under the rule of

a master flourished in all things. Their footprints yet remain to testify, that they were truly holy and perfect men: who fighting so valiantly trod the world under foot.

Now he is thought great, who is not a transgressor: and who can with patience endure that which he undertook. O the lukewarmness and negligence of our estate; that we so quickly decline from the first ardour: and are weary of life for very fatigue and lukewarmness. Would to God the desire to grow in virtues may not wholly sleep in thee: who hast often seen many examples of the devout.

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE EXERCISES OF A GOOD RELIGIOUS

THE life of a good religious should be adorned with all virtues: that he may be such inwardly, as outwardly he seems to men. And with reason there should be far more within than is perceived without: for our Overseer is God; whom we ought most highly to reverence where-soever we are: and like Angels to walk in purity in His sight. Daily ought we to renew our purpose, and stir up ourselves to fervour: as though this were the first day of our conversion, and say. Help me Lord God in a good purpose and in Thy holy service; and grant that I may

now this day begin perfectly: for what I have done hitherto is nothing.

According to our purpose shall be the course of our growth: and much diligence is necessary to him that will make good progress. And if he that firmly purposes often fails; what shall he do that seldom, or less resolutely purposes any thing? Yet we desert our purpose in many ways: and the light omission of exercises seldom passes without some loss. The purpose of the just depends not upon their own wisdom but upon God's grace: in whom also they always trust, for whatsoever they take in hand. For man proposes, but God disposes:¹ neither is the way of man in himself.²

If for the sake of piety or of profit to a brother an accustomed exercise be sometimes omitted: it may easily afterwards be recovered again. But if from weariness of mind or carelessness we lightly forsake it: it is a fault, and will be felt to be hurtful. Let us do the best we can: still we shall easily fail in many things. Yet must we always propose some definite plan: and especially against those infirmities which do most of all hinder us.

We must search into and set in order both the

¹ Prov. xvi. 9. *Cor hominis disponit uitam suam; sed Domini est dirigere gressus eius.*

² Jer. x. 23.

outward and the inward: because both are of importance to our progress. If thou canst not continually recollect thyself; yet do it sometimes and at the least once a day: namely in the morning or at night. In the morning purpose, and at night examine thy manners, how thou hast behaved thyself this day in word, deed and thought: for in these perhaps thou hast often offended both God and thy neighbour. Gird up thy loins like a man against the wickednesses of the devil: bridle thy appetite, and thou wilt the more easily bridle every inclination of the flesh. Never be wholly idle: but either reading or writing, or praying or meditating or endeavouring something for the common good.

Yet bodily exercises must be used with discretion: neither are they to be practised of all men alike. Those which are not common, are not to be shown outwardly: for things private are practised more safely in secret. Nevertheless beware thou shirk not those which are common, to run after exercises of thy own choosing; but having fully and faithfully accomplished all which thou art bound and enjoined to do: if thou hast any spare time give thyself to thyself, as thy devotion shall desire. All cannot use one exercise: but one is more useful for this person another for that.

According to the season also different exercises

are pleasing : some suit better on holy days, others on working days. Some we need in time of temptation : and others in time of peace and quietness. Some we love to practise when we are sad : and others when we rejoice in the Lord.

About the time of the chief festivals good exercises are to be renewed : and the prayers of Saints more fervently to be implored. From festival to festival we should make some purpose as though we were then to depart out of this world : and come to the everlasting festival. Therefore ought we anxiously to prepare ourselves at holy times, and to live more devoutly ; and to keep more exactly all our observances, as though we were shortly at God's hands to receive the reward of our labours. But if it be deferred ; let us believe that we are insufficiently prepared and unworthy yet of so great glory which shall be revealed in us in due time:¹ and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves better for our departure. Blessed is that servant saith the Evangelist Luke : whom his Lord when He cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you : He shall make him ruler over all His goods.²

¹ Rom. viii. 18.

² Luke xii. 43, 44.

CHAPTER XX

OF THE LOVE OF SOLITUDE AND SILENCE

SEEK a fit time to retire into thyself: and meditate often upon God's loving-kindnesses. Throw aside subtleties; read thoroughly such books: as rather stir compunction, than furnish occupation. If thou wilt withdraw from needless talk, and idle gadding about, as also from listening to news and rumours: thou shalt find leisure enough and suitable for meditation on good things. The greatest Saints avoided the society of men when they could: and rather chose to serve God in secret.

One said. As oft as I have gone among men: I returned home less a man.¹ This we often find: when we talk long together. It is easier not to speak a word at all: than not to speak a word too much. It is easier to hide at home: than to be guarded abroad. He therefore that intends to attain to the inward and spiritual: must with Jesus withdraw from the press.² No man goes out securely: but he who loves to hide.

¹ Seneca, *Ep.* vii.: but the words are adapted or loosely quoted from some commonplace book. The passage runs, *Auarior redeo, ambitiosior, luxuriosior, immo uero crudelior et inhumanior, quia inter homines fui.* The same quotation in the same form is found in the sermon on Christmas Day, No. iv. in Miss Winkworth's *Life and Sermons of Dr. John Tauler.*

² John v. 13: Luke v. 15, 16.

No man speaks securely: but he who loves to hold his peace. No man rules securely: but he that loves to be beneath. No man commands securely: but he that has learned loyally to obey. No man rejoices securely: unless he has within him the testimony of a good conscience.

And yet always the security of the Saints was full of the fear of God; neither were they the less anxious and humble in themselves: for that they shone outwardly with great virtues and grace. But the security of bad men arises from pride and presumption: and in the end turns to their own deception. Never promise thyself security in this life: although thou seem to be a good monk or a devout hermit. Oftentimes those who are better in the judgment of men: have fallen into greater danger by overmuch self-confidence. Wherefore to many it is more profitable, not to be altogether free from temptations: but to be often assaulted; lest they should be too secure, lest they should be lifted up with pride: lest even they should too freely turn aside to outward comforts.

O if a man would never seek after transitory joy; never busy himself with the world: how good a conscience would he keep. O if he would cut off all vain anxiety, and think only upon things saving and divine, and place all his hope in God: how great peace and quietness would he possess.

No man is worthy of heavenly comfort : unless he have diligently exercised himself in holy compunction. If thou desirest true contrition of heart ; enter into thy secret chamber and shut out the tumults of the world : as it is written. In your chambers be ye grieved.¹ In thy cell thou shalt find : what abroad thou shalt too often lose. A cell well kept is delightsome : ill kept is full of weariness. If in the beginning of thy conversion thou hast dwelt in it and guarded it well : it will afterwards be to thee a dear friend and a most pleasant comfort. In silence and in stillness the religious soul grows and learns the mysteries of Holy Writ : there she finds rivers of tears, wherein she may wash and cleanse herself night after night ;² that she may be the more familiar with her Creator : the farther she dwells from all the riot of the world. Whoso therefore withdraweth himself from his acquaintance and friends : God will draw near unto him with His holy Angels. It is better for a man to hide and take care of himself : than to neglect his soul and work wonders.

It is commendable in a religious, seldom to go out, to be unwilling to be seen : or even to see. Why wilt thou see ; what thou mayest not have ? The world passeth away and the lust thereof.³

¹ Psal. iv. 5 (Vulgate), *In cubilibus uestris compungimini.*

² Psal. vi. 6 (7).

³ 1 John ii. 17.

Our sensual desires draw us to rove abroad ; but when the hour is past what carriest thou home with thee but a burdened conscience and distracted heart ? A merry going out brings often a sad return :¹ and a joyful evening makes a sad morning. So all carnal joy enters with a smile : but in the end it bites and kills.²

What canst thou see elsewhere, which thou canst not see here ? Behold the heaven and the earth and all the elements : for of these are all things created. What canst thou see anywhere ; that can long continue under the sun ? Thou thinkest perchance to satisfy thyself : but thou canst never attain it. Shouldst thou see all this present world ; what were it but a vain show ? Lift up thine eyes to God in the highest :³ and pray over thy sins and negligences. Leave vain things to the vain : fix thou thy thoughts upon God's commands to thee. Shut thy door behind thee : and call unto thee Jesus thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy cell : for thou shalt not find so great peace elsewhere. If thou hadst not gone abroad and hearkened to rumours : thou wouldest the better have preserved a happy peace. Since thou delightest sometimes to hear news : it is fit thou suffer for it disquietude of heart.

¹ Compare *Theol. Germ.*, chap. ix., *Thus that proverb is still true, Going out were never so good but staying at home were much better.*

² Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.

³ Psal. cxxi. (cxx.) 1 : cxxiii. (cxxii.) 1.

CHAPTER XXI

OF COMPUNCTION OF HEART

IF thou wilt make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God ; and seek not too much liberty, but restrain all thy senses under discipline : and give not thyself over to foolish mirth. Give thyself to compunction of heart : and thou shalt find devotion. Compunction layeth open much good : which distraction is wont quickly to destroy. It is wonderful, that a man can ever perfectly rejoice in this life : who considers and weighs his exile and the many perils of his soul.

Through frivolity of heart and neglect of our failings we do not feel the sorrows of our soul ; but often vainly laugh : when we have just cause to weep. There is no true liberty, nor wholesome delight : but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast off all distracting hindrances : and gather himself into the unity of holy compunction. Happy is he who abandons : all that may stain or burden his conscience.

Quit thyself like a man : one custom drives out another.

If thou canst let others alone : they will kindly leave thee alone to do thy own work. Draw not to thyself the affairs of others : nor entangle thy-

self in the affairs of the great. Still have an eye to thyself first: and admonish thyself especially before all thy beloved friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men be not grieved at it; but take this to heart, that thou dost not behave thyself so warily and circumspectly: as becomes a servant of God and a devout religious.

It is better oftentimes and safer that a man should not have many consolations in this life: especially such as are according to the flesh. But if we have not divine consolations or seldom taste them, the fault is ours; because we seek not compunction of heart: nor absolutely cast away vain and outward comforts. Know that thou art unworthy of divine consolation: and hast rather deserved much tribulation.

When a man is perfectly contrite: then is the whole world heavy and bitter unto him. A good man finds cause enough for mourning and weeping. For whether he consider his own or his neighbour's estate: he knows that none lives here without tribulation. And the more narrowly he considers himself: the more he sorrows. Our sins and vices are matter of just sorrow and inward compunction; wherein we lie so enwrapt; that we can seldom apply ourselves to heavenly contemplations.

Didst thou oftener think of thy death, than of

a long life: doubtless thou wouldest be more zealous to amend. If also thou didst consider in thy heart the future pains of hell or purgatory; I believe thou wouldest willingly bear labour or sorrow: and fear no austerity. But because these things pierce not to the heart, and we still love delights: therefore we remain cold and very dull.

It is often poverty of spirit: which makes our miserable body so easily complain. Pray therefore humbly unto the Lord, that He will give thee the spirit of compunction: and say with the Prophet. Feed me O Lord with bread of tears: and give me drink of tears in measure.¹

CHAPTER XXII

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN MISERY

I

MISERABLE thou art wherever thou art or whithersoever thou turnest: unless thou turn thyself to God.

Why art thou troubled; when things succeed not as thou wouldest or desirest? Who is he that hath all things to his mind? neither I nor thou: nor any man upon earth. There is none in the world without some tribulation or perplexity:

¹ Psal. lxxx. 5 (lxxix. 6).

though he be Emperor or Pope. Who has the better lot? Surely he who is able to suffer something for God.

Many irresolute and weak ones : cry See what a good life that man has : how rich how great how powerful and exalted he is. But fix thy mind on heavenly treasure ; thou shalt see that all these worldly goods are not goods at all, but very uncertain and rather burdens : because they are never possessed without anxiety and fear. Man's happiness consists not in abundance of temporal goods : but a moderate portion is enough for him.

Truly it is misery to live upon the earth. The more a man will be spiritual, the more does this present life become to him bitter : because he feels more sensibly and sees more clearly the defects of human corruption. For to eat to drink to wake to sleep, to rest and labour, and to be subject to the other necessities of nature, is truly great misery and affliction to a devout man : who would gladly be set loose and free from all sin. For the inward man is much oppressed with bodily necessities in this world. Therefore the Prophet devoutly prays : that he may have power to be free from them saying. Pluck me forth O Lord from my necessities.¹

But woe be to them that know not their own

¹ Psal. xxv. (xxiv. 17).

misery: and still more woe to them that love this miserable and corruptible life. For some there be who so cling to it, although by labour or by begging they can scarce get necessaries: that if they might live here always, they would care nothing for the Kingdom of God. O foolish and faithless in heart; who lie so deeply sunk in earth: that they can taste nothing but the carnal. But wretched as they are they shall in the end feel to their cost: how vile and how nothing that was which they loved.

Whereas the Saints of God and all devout friends of Christ, regarded not those things which pleased the flesh; nor those which flourished in this life: but their whole hope and intention sighed for eternal treasure. Their whole desire was borne up to the lasting and invisible: that they might not be dragged into the depths by the love of what they could see.

My brother lose not thy confidence¹ of growing in godliness: thou hast yet time the hour is not yet past. Why wilt thou put off thy purpose to the morrow? Arise and begin this instant: and say. Now is the time to be doing; now is the time to be fighting: now is the fit time for amendment. When thou art ill at ease and troubled: then is the time for deserving.

Thou must pass through fire and water:² before

¹ Heb. x. 35, 36.

² Psal. lxvi. (lxv.) 12.

thou come to the place of refreshment. Unless thou use violence with thyself: thou shalt never get the victory over vice. So long as we carry about this frail body, we can never be without sin; or live without weariness and pain. We would gladly find rest from all misery; but seeing by sin we have lost innocence: we have lost also true felicity. Therefore it becomes us to keep patience; and wait for the mercy of God:¹ till this iniquity pass away, and mortality be swallowed up of life.²

II

O how great is human frailty: which is always prone to vice. To-day thou confessest thy sins: and to-morrow thou repeatest what thou didst confess. Now thou art purposed to watch: and in an hour thou art behaving, as though thou hadst never purposed at all. Good cause have we therefore to humble ourselves; and never to think highly of ourselves: since we are so frail and inconstant. Besides that may quickly be lost by negligence: which with much labour and time we have hardly gained through grace.

What will become of us in the end; who so early in the day grow cold? Woe unto us if we will so turn aside to rest, as if all were peace and safety: when as yet no trace of true holiness is

¹ Psal. lvii. 1 (lvi. 2).

² 2 Cor. v. 4.

to be seen in our conversation. We have much need like good novices to be newly trained in virtuous behaviour : if haply there might be hope of some future amendment, and greater spiritual growth.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF MEDITATION ON DEATH

VERY soon there will be an end of thee here : change thy view of thy condition. To-day man is : to-morrow he is no more seen. And when he is out of sight : quickly also is he out of mind.

O the stupidity and hardness of man's heart : which thinks only of the present, and does not rather provide for the future. Thou oughtest so to order thyself in all thy deeds and thoughts : as if to-day thou wert doomed to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience : thou wouldest not greatly fear death. Better to guard against sins : than fly from death. If to-day thou art not ready ; how wilt thou be so to-morrow ? To-morrow is uncertain ; and how knowest thou that thou wilt have a morrow ? What avails it to live long ; when there is so small amendment ? Ah length of days does not always amend : but often adds to our sins. O that we had spent but one day in this world well. Many count the years of

their conversion : yet scanty oftentimes is the fruit of amendment.

If to die be dreadful : to live long may perhaps prove more dangerous. Happy is he that has always the hour of his death before his eyes : and daily prepares himself to die. If thou hast ever seen a man die : think that thou also must travel the same road. When it is morning : think thou mayest not live till evening. And when evening comes : dare not to promise thyself the morning. Be thou therefore always ready :¹ and so live, that death may never take thee unprepared. Many die suddenly and when they look not for it: for at an hour when we think not, the Son of Man will come.

When that last hour shall come; thou wilt begin to think far differently of thy whole past life: and be exceeding sorry that thou hast been so careless and remiss. How happy and wise is he, that now strives so to live: as he would be found at his death. For a perfect contempt of the world; a fervent desire for growth in virtue; the love of discipline the toil of penance; the readiness of obedience; the denying of ourselves; and the bearing of all afflictions for the love of Christ: will give us great assurance of a happy death.

Whilst thou art in health thou mayest do much

¹ Luke xii. 40: Matt. xxiv. 42.

good: but when thou art sick I see not what thou wilt be able to do. Few by sickness are reformed: as also they who go much on pilgrimage, seldom become holy.

Trust not on friends and kindred; neither do thou put off thy salvation till hereafter: for men will forget thee sooner than thou thinkest. It is better to make provision betimes, and send some good before thee: than to trust to other men's help. If thou be not careful for thyself now: who will be careful for thee hereafter? The time that is now is very precious: now are the days of salvation: now is the acceptable time.¹ But alas that thou shouldest spend so idly: the time in which thou mightest earn the means for eternal life. The time will come, when thou shalt desire one day or hour to amend in: and I know not that it will be granted thee.

Come beloved, from what danger mightest thou deliver thyself, from what fear save thyself: if thou wouldest be ever fearful and mindful of death. Study now so to live: that at the hour of death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear. Learn now to die to the world: that thou mayest then begin to live with Christ. Learn now to despise all things: that thou mayest then freely go to Christ. Chastise thy body now by penance: that thou mayest then have assured confidence.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 2: Is. xlix. 8: Luke iv. 19.

Ah fool why dost thou think to live long ; when thou hast not a day without alarms ? How many have been deceived : and suddenly snatched away. How often hast thou heard men say, He is slain with the sword ; he is drowned : he fell from a height and broke his neck : he choked himself with his meat, he died at the gaming table : one perished by fire, another by steel, another of the plague, another by robbers ; and so death is the end of all : and man's life suddenly passeth like a shadow.¹

Who will remember thee when thou art dead ; and who will pray for thee ? Do do now my beloved whatsoever thou canst do ; for thou knowest not when thou shalt die : nor yet what shall befall thee after death. Whilst thou hast time : heap unto thyself everlasting riches. Think on nothing but thy salvation : care for nothing but the things of God. Make now friends to thyself by venerating the Saints of God, and imitating their actions ; that when thou failest in this life : they may receive thee into everlasting habitations.² Keep thyself as a pilgrim and stranger upon the earth :³ to whom the affairs of this world do nothing appertain. Keep thy heart free and uplifted to God : because thou hast here no abiding city.⁴ Thither

¹ Psal. cxliv. (cxliii.) 4.

² Luke xvi. 9.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

⁴ Heb. xiii. 14.

send daily thy prayers and sighs with tears: that after death thy spirit may be found worthy to pass happily to the Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF JUDGMENT AND THE PUNISHMENT
OF SINNERS

I

IN all things consider the end:¹ and how thou wilt stand before that severe Judge, from whom nothing is hid; who is not pacified with gifts, nor admits excuses: but will judge right judgment. O wretched and foolish sinner, what wilt thou answer to God who knoweth all thy wickedness; who sometimes fearest the countenance of an angry man? Why dost thou not provide for thyself against the day of judgment when no man can excuse or answer for another; but every one shall be burden enough for himself? Now thy labour is profitable; thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs are heard: thy grief makes satisfaction and purges thy soul.

II

A great and wholesome purgatory hath the patient man: who when he receives injuries grieves more for the malice of another, than for his own wrong; who prays cheerfully for his

¹ *Respic finem* is a proverb adopted by the Latins from the Greeks.

gainsayers : and from his heart forgives offences ; who delays not to ask forgiveness from others : who is quicker to pity than to wrath ; who often uses violence to himself : and labours to bring the flesh wholly into subjection to the spirit.

It is better now to purge our sins and cut off our vices : than to keep them to be purged hereafter. Truly we deceive ourselves : through the inordinate love of the flesh. What else shall that fire burn up ;¹ but thy sins ? The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh : the more severe hereafter shall be thy expiation, and thou storest up more fuel for that flame.

In what things a man hath sinned : in the same shall he be the more grievously punished.² There shall the slothful be pricked forward with burning goads : and the glutton be tormented with great hunger and thirst. There shall the luxurious and lovers of pleasures be bathed in burning pitch and stinking brimstone : and the envious like mad dogs shall howl for grief. Every vice : shall have its proper torment. There the proud shall be filled with all confusion : and the covetous

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 13, 15.

² Compare for the sense *Wisd. xi. 17, ut scirent quia per quae peccat quis, per haec et torquetur.* But the idea that our vices are made the whips to scourge us is first developed in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, of which an important fragment has recently been discovered. This is the prime source of all pictures of the world of torment, including that of Dante.

shall be pinched with miserable penury. There one hour of pain: shall be more bitter than a hundred years of the sharpest penance here. There is no rest, no comfort for the damned: yet here we have some pause from toil, and enjoy the comfort of our friends.

Be now anxious and sorrowful, because of thy sins: that at the day of judgment thou mayest be free from dread with the blessed ones. For then shall the righteous stand with great boldness: against such as have vexed and oppressed them.¹ Then shall he stand to judge: who now submits himself humbly to the censures of men. Then shall the poor and humble have great confidence: but the proud shall fear on every side. Then will it appear that he was wise in this world: who learned to be a fool and despised for Christ's sake. Then every affliction that we bore patiently shall delight us: and all iniquity shall shut its mouth.² Then shall all the devout rejoice: and all the profane lament. Then shall the flesh that was afflicted rejoice more: than if it had been nurtured in delights. Then shall the mean attire shine gloriously: and the silken robes seem vile. Then the poor cottage shall be more commended: than the gilded palace. Then will steady patience help us more: than all the power of the world. Then simple obedience shall be exalted: above

¹ Wisdom v. 1.

² Psal. cvii. (cvi.) 42.

all worldly craft. Then shall a clean and good conscience more rejoice a man: than learned philosophy. Then shall the contempt of riches weigh more: than all the worldling's treasure. Then wilt thou find more comfort in devout prayer: than in dainty cheer. Then wilt thou rejoice more that thou hast kept silence: than that thou hast talked much. Then will holy works more avail: than many fine words. Then a strict life and severe penance will be more pleasing: than all earthly delight.

Learn that thou art now suffering in little things: that thou mayest then be delivered from heavier pains. Here first try: what thou canst endure hereafter. If now thou canst not endure so little; how wilt thou bear eternal torments? If now a little suffering make thee so impatient; what will hell do then?

Mark well thou canst not have two joys: thou canst not delight in this world and after that reign with Christ. If thou hadst lived till this day in perpetual honours and delights; what would all this profit thee, if thou wert to die at this instant?¹ All therefore is vanity: except to love God and serve Him only.²

For he that loves God with all his heart; fears neither death nor punishment, nor judgment nor hell: for perfect love gives fearless access to

¹ Luke xii. 20.

² Compare chap. i. above.

God.¹ But he that still delights in sin: no marvel is it if he be afraid of death and judgment. Yet it is good, if love be not yet of force to withhold thee from sin: that at least the fear of hell should restrain thee. But he that puts off the fear of God; can never stand long in good: but falls quickly into the snares of the devil.

CHAPTER XXV
OF THE ZEALOUS AMENDMENT OF OUR
WHOLE LIFE

I

BE watchful and diligent in the service of God; and often bethink thyself wherefore thou camest hither: and why thou hast left the world. Was it not that thou mightest live to God; and become a spiritual man? Be zealous then in going forward; for shortly thou shalt receive the reward of thy labours: nor shall there be any more fear or sorrow in thy coasts. Thou shalt labour now a little: and thou shalt find great rest yea perpetual joy.² If thou continuest faithful and fervent in doing: no doubt but God will be faithful and liberal in rewarding. Thou oughtest to keep a good hope of winning the palm; but thou must not be secure: lest thou wax either sluggish or proud.

¹ John iv. 17, 18.

² Ecclesiasticus li. 35.

II

One that was in sore anxiety and often wavered between hope and fear ; and once was mastered by sorrow, prostrated himself in a church before an altar in prayer : and said within himself. O if I knew that I should yet persevere. Presently he heard the divine answer within him. But if thou didst know it ; what wouldest thou do ? Do now what thou wouldest do then : and thou shalt be free from fear. And being herewith comforted and strengthened he committed himself to the will of God : and that anxious fluctuation ceased. Neither would he pry farther to know what should befall him ; but rather laboured to ascertain, what was the acceptable and perfect will of God :¹ for the beginning and accomplishing of every good work.

Hope in the Lord and do good saith the Prophet, and inhabit the land : and thou shalt be fed in the riches thereof.²

One thing there is that draws many back from progress and zealous amendment : dread of difficulty or the toil of strife. For in truth they above all others grow best in all virtues : who struggle like men to overcome those things which are hardest and most contrary unto them. For there a man improves most, and earns greater

¹ Rom. xii. 2.

² Psal. xxxvii. (xxxvi.) 3.

grace: where most he conquers himself and mortifies himself in spirit. But all men have not as much to conquer and mortify. Yet the diligent and emulous though he have more passions shall go forward more strongly: than another that is of temperate disposition, but less zealous in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things in particular help to great amendment; to wit to pull ourselves violently away from that to which nature is viciously inclined:¹ and to labour zealously for that good which we most want. Be careful also to avoid and conquer those faults especially: which often displease thee in others. Gather some profit to thy soul everywhere: so that if thou seest or hearest good examples, thou mayest be kindled to imitation. But if thou observe anything blameworthy: beware thou do not the same. Or if ever thou hast done it: study quickly to amend thyself.

As thine eye observes others: so in turn art thou marked by others.

O how sweet and pleasant it is to see fervent and devout brethren: well-mannered and well-disciplined. How sad and grievous it is to see them walking disorderly:² not practising that to which they are called. How hurtful is it to

¹ *Subtrahere se violenter ad quod natura uitiose inclinatur.* There is perhaps a reference here to Arist. *Eth.* ii. 9.

² 2 Thess. iii. 6.

neglect the purpose of their call : and turn their thoughts aside to that which is not committed to them.

III

Be mindful of the resolution thou hast taken : and set before thine eyes the image of the Crucified. Thou mayest well be ashamed to look upon the life of Jesus Christ ; seeing thou hast not yet striven to conform thyself more perfectly unto Him : though thou hast been long in the way of God. A religious that exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of our Lord ; shall there find abundantly all that is profitable and necessary for him : nor needs to seek any better thing out of Jesus. O if Jesus crucified would come into our heart : how quickly and fully should we be instructed.

A zealous religious, bears well and takes well : all that is commanded him. A negligent and lukewarm religious, hath tribulation upon tribulation : and is straitened on all sides ; for he hath no inward consolation : and is forbidden to seek it without. A religious living out of discipline : lies open to great calamity. He that seeks a looser and easier rule, shall ever be straitened : for one thing or other will displease him. How do so many other religious act ; who are strictly bound under the discipline of the cloister ? They

rarely go out, they live in detachment from the world, they eat the poorest fare: they wear the coarsest clothing, they labour much, they speak little; they watch long, they rise early, they continue long in prayer, they read frequently: and guard themselves with all discipline. Mark the Carthusians, the Cistercians and the monks and nuns of various orders: how they rise every night to sing psalms to the Lord. And therefore it would be shameful that thou shouldest be slothful in so holy a work: when so great a multitude of religious begin to sing praise to God.

O that we had nothing else to do: but praise our Lord God with our whole heart and mouth. O that thou didst never need to eat or drink, or sleep: but always couldest praise God, and give thy whole time to spiritual pursuits; thou shouldest then be much more happy: than now when for every necessity thou servest the flesh. Would God there were not these necessities; but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul: which alas we taste too seldom.

When a man attains to this, that he seeks not his comfort from any creature; then doth God first begin to be perfectly sweet unto him; then also shall he be well content with whatsoever doth befall him. Then will he neither rejoice in great matters nor grieve for small: but entirely and trustfully throw himself on God who is unto him

all in all ; to whom assuredly nothing perishes, nor dies : but all things do live unto Him and serve him at His beck without delay.

Remember always the end : and that time lost never returns. Without care and diligence thou shalt never get virtues. If thou begin to wax lukewarm : it will begin to be evil with thee. But if thou give thyself to zeal, thou shalt find great peace ; and feel toil lighter : through God's grace and the love of virtue. The zealous and diligent : is ready for all things.

It is harder work to resist vices and passions : than to sweat in bodily labours.

He that avoids not small faults : by little and little falls into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice at eventide : if thou spend the day fruitfully. Watch over thyself : arouse thyself, warn thyself ; and whatever becomes of others : neglect not thyself. The greater shall be thy growth : the more violence thou usest upon thyself. Amen.

HERE END ADMONITIONS USEFUL FOR
A SPIRITUAL LIFE

SECOND BOOK

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HERE BEGIN
ADMONITIONS DRAWING
TO THE INNER LIFE

[SECOND BOOK]

CHAPTER I
OF THE INNER LIFE

I

THE Kingdom of God is within you¹ saith the Lord. Turn thee with thy whole heart² unto the Lord ; and forsake this wretched world : and thy soul shall find rest. Learn to despise the outward and to give thyself to the inward : and thou shalt see the Kingdom of God come into thee. For the Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost :³ which is not given to the unholy. Christ will come unto thee and shew thee His own consolation : if thou prepare for Him a worthy abode within.

All His glory and beauty is within :⁴ and there He delights Himself. Frequent are His visits to the inward man ; sweet His discourse pleasant His solace : great His peace, exceeding wonderful His familiarity.

Come faithful soul make ready thy heart for this Bridegroom : that He may deign to come unto thee, and dwell within thee. For thus saith He.

¹ Luke xvii. 20, 21.

² Joel ii. 12.

³ Rom. xiv. 17.

⁴ Psal. xlv. 13 (xliv. 14).

If any love Me he will keep My words; and We will come unto him: and will make our abode with him.¹ Make therefore room for Christ: and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ: thou art rich and hast enough. He will be thy provider and faithful steward in all things: so that thou shalt not need to trust in men. For men soon change and quickly fail; but Christ abides for ever:² and stands by us firmly unto the end. Great trust should not be put in a frail and mortal man, even though he be useful and dear unto us; neither ought we to be much grieved: if sometimes he cross and contradict us. They that to-day are with thee, to-morrow may be against thee: and often do they veer right round like the wind.

II

Put all thy trust in God: let Him be thy fear and thy love. He shall answer for thee:³ and will do thee good as shall be best. Thou hast not here an abiding city:⁴ and wheresoever thou mayest be thou art a stranger and pilgrim;⁵

¹ John xiv. 23.

² John xii. 34.

³ Psal. xxxviii. (xxxvii.) 15. The Prayer-Book Version has, *Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.* The R.V. also has, *Thou wilt answer;* but the A.V., the Vulgate, and the LXX. all have, *Thou wilt hear.* Can a Kempis be referring to this passage? Readers of Herbert will remember *the Quip* and its refrain. But a friend suggests to me that the reference is to Is. xxxviii. 14, *Domine, uim patior, responde pro me.*

⁴ Heb. xiii. 14.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

neither shalt thou ever have rest: unless thou be inwardly united unto Christ. Why dost thou look around thee here; since this is not the place of thy rest? In Heaven should be thy home: and all earthly things are to be looked upon in passing by. All things pass: and thou with them. Beware thou cling not: lest thou be caught and perish. Let thy thought be with the Highest:¹ and let thy prayer for mercy be directed unto Christ without ceasing.

If thou canst not contemplate high and heavenly things; rest in the passion of Christ: and dwell gladly in His sacred wounds. For if thou fly devoutly unto the wounds and precious marks of Jesus: thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation; thou wilt not much care for the slights of men: and wilt easily bear words of detraction.

Christ also in the world was despised of men: and forsaken in His greatest need by acquaintance and friends in the midst of slanders. Christ was willing to suffer and be despised; and dost thou dare complain of any man? Christ had adversaries and backbiters; and dost thou wish to have all men thy friends and benefactors? How shall thy patience reach her crown; if no adversity befall thee!

If thou art willing to suffer no opposition; how wilt thou be the friend of Christ? Bear thyself up with Christ and for Christ: if thou wilt reign with Christ.

¹ Wisdom v. 9. 16.

If thou hadst but once perfectly entered into the inner life of Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love : then wouldest thou not regard thine own convenience or inconvenience ; but rather wouldest rejoice at shame that is cast upon thee : for the love of Jesus makes a man despise himself. A lover of Jesus and of truth, who truly lives the inner life and is free from inordinate affections : can freely turn himself unto God, and lift himself above himself in spirit and rest in fruition.

He that tastes all things as they are,¹ not as they are said or thought to be ; is truly wise : and taught of God rather than of men. He that can walk inwardly, and make small reckoning of things without ; neither requires places nor waits for times : for performing devout exercises. An inward man quickly recollects himself : because he never pours himself wholly out on outward things. He finds no hindrance in outward labour, or business necessary for the time ; but as things fall out : so he accommodates himself to them. He that is well ordered and disposed within : cares not for the strange and perverse behaviour of men.

A man is hindered and distracted : in proportion as he draws things unto himself. If it were well with thee and thou wert thoroughly purged :

¹ S. Bernard, *Serm. ad. Diu. xviii.* *Est enim sapiens cui quæque res sapiunt ut sunt.* H.

all things would fall out to thee for good¹ and for thy progress. Many things displease and often trouble thee ; because thou art not yet perfectly dead unto thyself : nor separated from all earthly affairs.

Nothing so stains and entangles the heart of man : as impure love to creatures. If thou refuse outward comfort : thou wilt be able to contemplate the things of Heaven and often to rejoice within.

CHAPTER II OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION

REGARD not much who is for thee or against thee : but see thou well to this, that God be with thee in every thing thou doest. Have a good conscience : and God will defend thee well. For whom God will help : no man's perverseness can hurt. If thou canst be silent and suffer : without doubt thou shalt see the help of the Lord. He knows the time and manner how to deliver thee : and therefore thou oughtest to resign thyself unto Him. God alone can aid : and deliver from all confusion.

Often it greatly helps to keep us more humble : that others know and rebuke our faults. When a man humbles himself for his failings then he

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

easily pacifies others: and quickly satisfies those that are angry with him. God protects the humble and delivers him: the humble He loves and comforts. Unto the humble man He inclines Himself; unto the humble He gives great grace:¹ and after his abasement He raises him up to glory. Unto the humble He reveals His secrets: and sweetly draws and invites him unto Himself. The humble in the midst of confusion is yet content in peace: for he rests on God and not on the world.

Think not that thou hast made any progress: unless thou feel thyself inferior to all.

CHAPTER III OF THE GOOD PEACEMAKER

FIRST keep thyself in peace: and then shalt thou be able to set others at peace.

A peacemaker doth more good: than he that is well learned. A passionate man draws even good into evil: and easily believes the worst. A good peacemaker: turns all things to good.

He that is well in peace: is not suspicious of any. But he that is discontented and troubled: is tossed with divers suspicions. He is neither quiet himself: nor suffers others to be quiet. He often utters what he ought not to utter:

¹ 1 Peter v. 5: Psal. xxv. (xxiv.) 9.

and neglects what it were better for him to do. He dwells upon the duty of others : and forgets his own.

First therefore be severe towards thyself : and then mayest thou justly be severe also towards thy neighbour. Thou knowest well how to excuse and colour thine own deeds : but thou wilt not admit the excuses of others. It were more just that thou shouldest accuse thyself : and excuse thy brother. If thou wilt be carried : carry also another.

Behold how far off thou art yet from true charity and humility : which knows not how to be angry or indignant, with any except one's self.

It is no great matter to associate with the good and gentle : for this is naturally pleasing to all ; and every one is glad to enjoy peace : and loves those best that agree with him. But to be able to live as a peacemaker with the hard and perverse or disorderly or tiresome : is a great grace and very commendable, and a manly thing.

Some there are that keep themselves in peace : and are in peace also with others. And there are some that neither are in peace themselves : nor suffer others to go in peace. They are troublesome to others : but always more troublesome to themselves. And some there are that keep themselves in peace : and study to bring others back to peace.

Nevertheless our whole peace in this miserable life is rather to be placed in humble sufferance : than in not feeling vexations. He that can best tell how to endure : will keep greater peace. That man is conqueror of himself and lord of the world : the friend of Christ and heir of Heaven.

CHAPTER IV

OF A PURE MIND AND SIMPLE INTENTION

BY two wings¹ a man is lifted up from earth : namely by Simplicity and Purity.

Simplicity ought to be in intention : Purity in affection. Simplicity intends God : Purity apprehends and tastes Him.

No good action will hinder thee : if thou be free from inordinate affection within. If thou intend and seek nothing else but the pleasure of God and the good of thy neighbour : thou shalt enjoy perfect internal freedom.

If thy heart were right : then every creature would be a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine.² There is no creature so small and abject : but it reflects the goodness of God.

¹ Is there an allusion here to the hymn beginning, *Equis binas columbinas Alas dabit animae?* Trench, *Sacred Latin Poetry*, p. 150.

² There may here be a reference to a hymn of Alain de Lille, which begins, *Omnis mundi creatura Quasi liber et pictura Nobis est et speculum.* It is given by Trench, *Sacred Latin Poetry*, p. 257.

If thou wert good and pure within: then wouldest thou see and understand all things well without hindrance. A pure heart penetrates Heaven and hell.

Such as every one is inwardly: so he judges outwardly.

If there be joy in the world: surely a man of pure heart possesses it. And if there be any where tribulation and distress: an evil conscience best knows it.

As iron thrust into the fire loses its rust, and becomes white-hot throughout; so he that wholly turns himself unto God puts off all sloth: and is transformed into a new man. When a man begins to grow cold, then he is afraid of a little labour: and gladly receives external comfort. But when he begins to master himself perfectly and to walk like a man in the way of God; then he thinks less of those things: which before he found so hard.

CHAPTER V

OF THE CONSIDERATION OF ONE'S SELF

WE cannot trust much to ourselves: because grace oftentimes is wanting to us and sense also. There is but little light in us: and this we quickly lose by negligence. Oftentimes too we do not perceive: how blind we are within.

We often do badly : and excuse it worse. Sometimes we are moved with passion : and think it zeal. We blame small things in others : and pass over greater faults in ourselves. Quickly enough we feel and weigh what we suffer from others : but we heed not what others suffer from us. He that well and rightly considered his own works : would find no cause to judge hardly of another.

The inward man, sets the care of himself before all other cares. And he that diligently attends unto himself : can easily keep silence concerning others. Thou wilt never be inward and devout : unless thou keep silence in other men's affairs, and look especially to thyself. If thou attend wholly unto God and thyself : what thou seest without will little move thee. Where art thou when thou art not with thyself? And when thou hast skimmed all things ; what hast thou profited if thou hast neglected thyself. If thou desirest peace and true unity ; thou must count all things less than this :¹ and look only upon thyself.

Thou shalt then make great progress : if thou give thyself holiday from all temporal care. Thou shalt greatly fall back : if thou make much of any thing temporal. Let nothing be

¹ *quod totum adhuc postponas.* The word *adhuc* is omitted in the Magd. MS. It is certainly difficult, and can hardly bear its usual sense.

great unto thee nothing high, nothing pleasing nothing acceptable : but simply God, or that which is of God. Whatever comfort comes to thee from any creature : count it all vain. A soul that loves God : despises all that is less than God. God alone is eternal and infinite filling all things : the soul's comfort and the true joy of heart.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

THE glory of a good man : is the testimony of a good conscience.

Have a good conscience : and thou shalt ever have joy. A good conscience can carry very much : and is very cheerful in adversities. An evil conscience, is always fearful and unquiet. Thou shalt rest sweetly : if thy heart do not accuse thee.¹ Never rejoice : but when thou hast done well. Bad men have never true joy nor feel inward peace : because There is no peace for the wicked saith the Lord.² And if they say, We are in peace, no evil shall come upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us:³ believe them not ; for suddenly the wrath of God will arise, and their deeds shall be brought to nought : and their thoughts shall perish.⁴

¹ 1 John iii. 21.

³ Micah iii. 11.

² Is. xlvi. 22 : lvii. 21.

⁴ Psal. cxlv. (cxlv.) 4.

To glory in tribulation, is not hard for him that loves: for so to glory is to glory in the Cross of the Lord.¹

Shortlived is glory: which is given and received from men. Sadness always attends the world's glory. The glory of the good is in their consciences: and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God and in God: and their joy is of the Truth. He that desires true and eternal glory: cares not for the temporal. And he that seeks temporal glory or despises it not from his soul: stands convicted of little love for the heavenly.

He has great tranquillity of heart: that cares neither for praise nor dispraise. He will easily be content and peaceable: whose conscience is clean. Thou art not holier if thou art praised: nor meaner if thou art reproached. What thou art that thou art: neither can words make thee greater than thou art in the sight of God.

If thou consider what thou art within: thou wilt not care what men say of thee. Man looketh on the countenance: but God on the heart.² Man considers the deeds: but God weighs the intentions.

To be always doing well and to think little of one's self: is the mark of a humble soul. To refuse to be comforted by any creature: is a

¹ Rom. v. 3: Gal. vi. 14.

² 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

mark of great purity and inward confidence. He that seeks no witness for himself without: has clearly committed himself wholly unto God.³ For not he that commendeth himself is approved saith blessed Paul: but whom God commendeth.¹ To walk inwardly with God, and not be fettered by any affection without: is the state of an inward man.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS

BLESSED is he that understands what it is to love Jesus: and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. Thou shouldest leave beloved for Beloved: for Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of things created is deceitful and unstable: the love of Jesus is faithful and untiring. He that cleaves unto creatures shall fall with the falling: he that embraces Jesus shall stand fast for ever. Love Him and keep Him for thy friend; who when all go away will not forsake thee: nor suffer thee to perish in the end. Some time or other thou must be separated from all: whether thou wilt or no. Keep thee close to Jesus in life and death and commit thyself unto His trust: who when all fail can alone help thee.

¹ 2 Cor. x. 18.

Thy Beloved is of such nature, that He will bear no rival; but will have thy heart to Himself: and sit on his own throne as King. If thou couldest empty thyself perfectly from all creatures: Jesus would gladly dwell with thee. Almost wholly lost wilt thou find: what thou hast entrusted to men away from Jesus. Trust not nor lean upon a reed swaying with the wind;¹ for all flesh is grass: and all the glory thereof shall wither as the flower of grass.²

Thou shalt quickly be deceived: if thou only look to the outward appearance of men. For if in others thou seekest thy comfort and gain: thou shalt too often feel loss. If thou seekest Jesus in all things: thou shalt surely find Jesus. But if thou seekest thyself, thou shalt also find thyself:³ but to thine own destruction. For man doth more hurt himself if he seek not Jesus: than the whole world and all his enemies.

CHAPTER VIII

OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

I

WHEN Jesus is present all is well: and nothing seems difficult. But when Jesus is absent: every thing is hard. When Jesus speaks not

¹ Is. xxxvi. 6: Matt. xi. 7: the passages are combined and the wording altered.

² Is. xl. 6, 7: 1 Pet. i. 24.

³ Matt. ix. 39.

within: all comfort is nothing worth. But if Jesus speak but one word: great consolation is felt. Did not Mary Magdalene rise immediately from the place where she wept; when Martha said to her The Master is come and calleth for thee?¹ Happy hour: when Jesus calls from tears to spiritual joy.

How dry and hard art thou without Jesus. How foolish and vain: if thou desire any thing out of Jesus. Is not this a greater loss; than if thou shouldest lose the whole world?² What can the world give thee without Jesus? To be without Jesus is dreadful hell: and to be with Jesus sweet paradise. If Jesus be with thee: no enemy can hurt thee. He that finds Jesus finds good treasure:³ yea good above all good. And he that loses Jesus loses much indeed: yea more than the whole world. Poor indeed is he who lives without Jesus: and he most rich who is well with Jesus.

II

It is great skill, to know how to commune with Jesus: and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom. Be thou humble and peacemaking: and Jesus will be with thee. Be devout and quiet: and Jesus will stay with thee. Thou mayest soon drive away Jesus and lose His grace: if thou wilt

¹ John xi. 28.

² Matt. xvi. 26.

³ Matt. xiii. 44.

turn aside to outward things. And if thou shouldst drive Him from thee and lose Him ; unto whom wilt thou flee and whom wilt thou then seek for thy friend ? Without a friend thou canst not live well ; and if Jesus be not above all a friend to thee : thou wilt be very sad and desolate. Thou actest therefore like a fool : if thou trust or rejoice in any other. Rather choose to have all the world against thee : than Jesus angry. Above all therefore that be dear : let Jesus alone be specially beloved.

III

Love all for Jesus : but Jesus for Himself. Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be beloved : who alone is found good and faithful above all friends. For Him and in Him let friends and foes alike be dear unto thee ; and all these are to be prayed for : that they may all know and love Him.

Never desire to be singularly praised or beloved ; for this is for God alone : who hath none like unto Himself. Neither do thou desire that the heart of any should be set on thee ; nor do thou set thy heart on the love of any : but let Jesus be in thee and in every good man.

Be pure and free within : and entangle not thyself with any creature. Thou must be naked and carry a heart pure towards God : if thou

wouldest be free and see how sweet the Lord is.¹ And truly thou wilt not attain to this unless thou be prevented and drawn by His grace ; so that having turned out and said good-bye to all : thou mayest be united alone to Him alone. For when the grace of God comes to a man : then he is made able for all things. And when it goeth away, then is he poor and weak : and as it were left only for the scourge. In this case thou must not be dejected nor despair, but stand calmly at God's will : and bear all that comes upon thee for the glory of Jesus Christ ; for after winter follows summer : after night returns the day, and after tempest a great calm.

CHAPTER IX

OF THE WANT OF ALL COMFORT

I

IT is no hard matter to despise human comfort : when we have divine. It is much and very much to be able to want both human and divine comfort : and for God's honour be willing cheerfully to bear exile of heart, and seek oneself in nothing : nor regard one's own deserts.

What great matter is it, if at the coming of grace thou be cheerful and devout ? This hour is wished for of all men. He rides pleasantly :

¹ Psal. xxxiv. 8 (xxxiii. 9) : xlvi. 10 (xlv. 11).

whom the grace of God carries. And what wonder if he feel no burden, who is carried by the Almighty ; and led by the Sovereign Guide ?

Gladly do we find something for our comfort : and hardly does a man strip himself of self. The holy martyr Laurence as well as his priest¹ overcame the world : because all that seemed delightsome in the world he despised ; and for the love of Christ he patiently suffered even God's chief priest Sixtus whom he most dearly loved : to be taken away from him. He therefore overcame the love of man by the love of the Creator : and in place of human comfort he rather chose what pleased God. So also do thou learn to part even with a near and dear friend for the love of God ; nor do thou take it hard when thou art deserted by a friend : knowing that we must all at last be separated from one another.

A man must strive hard and long within him-

¹ *His priest* was Pope Sixtus, or Xystus (see *Dictionary of Christian Biography*), to whom Laurence was deacon. Both suffered martyrdom under Valerian in 258 A.D. A Kempis is here following the account given by St. Maximus of Turin (*Hom. I. de Sancto Laurentio*). 'The venerable Sixtus, the chief priest of the Roman city, as he was surmounting by torture the cruelty of the persecuting world, and was now on the confines of the heavenly kingdom, and beheld Laurence very sorrowful at his father's death, is recorded in the spirit of prophecy thus to have addressed him : "Be not sad, my son ; after three days thou shalt follow me." Whence it appears, dearly beloved, that blessed Laurence entertained not this sorrow at his priest's victory, but was grieved that he was not himself in like manner together with his priest overcoming the world.' (1841.)

self, before he can learn fully to master himself : and to draw his whole heart into God. When a man stands upon himself : he easily slides unto human comforts. But a true lover of Christ and diligent follower of virtues, does not fall back on comforts ; nor seek such sensible delights : but rather chooses to endure sharp exercises and hard labours for Christ.

II

When therefore spiritual comfort is given thee from God, receive it with thankfulness ; but understand that it is the gift of God : not any desert of thine. Be not uplifted, be not too joyful nor vainly presumptuous ; but rather be the more humble for that gift, more wary too and fearful in all thine actions ; for that hour will pass away and temptation will follow. When consolation is taken from thee do not immediately despair ; but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation : for God is able to give thee back again more ample consolation.

This is nothing new nor strange unto them that are experienced in the way of God : for in great Saints and ancient Prophets, there was the same kind of ebb and flow. Hence one who was in the enjoyment of divine grace said. I said in my prosperity : I shall never be moved.¹ But what

¹ Psal. xxx. 6-11 (xxix. 7-12).

he found in himself : in the absence of grace, he goes on thus to tell. Thou didst turn Thy face from me : and I was troubled. Yet in the midst of all this he by no means despairs : but more earnestly beseeches the Lord and says. Unto Thee O Lord will I cry : and I will pray unto my God. At length he reaps the fruit of his prayer : and testifies that he was heard saying. The Lord hath heard and taken pity on me : the Lord is become my helper. But wherein ? Thou hast turned saith he my sorrow into joy : and Thou hast compassed me about with gladness.

If great Saints were so dealt with ; we that are weak and poor should not despair, if we be sometimes fervent and sometimes cold : for the Spirit cometh and goeth according to the good pleasure of His own will.¹ For which cause blessed Job saith. Thou visitest him early in the morning : and suddenly Thou provest him.

III

In what then can I hope or in whom should I trust ; save in the great mercy of God alone, and in the only hope of heavenly grace ? For whether I have with me good men or devout brethren or faithful friends : whether holy books or beautiful treatises, or sweet chants and hymns ; all these help but little, have but little savour : when grace

¹ Job vii. 18.

forsakes me and I am left in mine own poverty. At such time there is no better remedy: than patience and self-denial according to the will of God.

I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace: or felt not some decrease of zeal. There was never Saint so highly rapt and illuminated: who before or after was not tempted. For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God: who has not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake. For temptation going before: is wont to be a sign of ensuing comfort. For unto those that are proved by temptations: heavenly comfort is promised. He that shall overcome saith He: I will give him to eat of the Tree of Life.¹

But divine consolation is given: that a man may be stronger to bear adversities. And temptation follows: lest he should wax proud of any good.

The devil sleeps not nor is the flesh yet dead, therefore cease not to prepare thyself to the battle: for on thy right hand and on thy left are foes who never rest.

¹ Rev. ii. 7.

CHAPTER X

OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

WHY seekest thou rest ; since thou art born to toil ?¹ Look to patience rather than to comforts : and to bearing the Cross rather than to gladness.

What worldling is there that would not gladly receive spiritual comfort and joy ; if he could always have it ? For spiritual comforts exceed : all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh. For all worldly delights : are vain or base. But spiritual delights alone are pleasant and honest : born from virtues, and infused by God into pure minds. But these divine comforts no man can always enjoy according to his wish : for the time of temptation is not long away.

False freedom of thought and great confidence in self : run very counter to the heavenly visitation. God does well in giving the grace of comfort : but man does evil, in not returning all to God with thanksgiving. And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us ; because we are ungrateful to the Giver : and pour them not wholly back to the fountain head. For grace is ever due to him that is duly grateful : and from the proud shall be taken what is given to the humble.

¹ Job v. 7.

I ask not consolation: that steals away my compunction. Nor do I seek contemplation: which leads to haughtiness. For the high is not always holy; nor the sweet always good nor every desire pure: nor is everything that we cherish pleasing to God. Gladly do I accept grace, whereby I may be found more humble and fearful: and become more ready to renounce myself. He that is taught by the gift of grace, and schooled by the rod of its withdrawal will not dare to ascribe any good to himself: but will rather confess that he is poor and naked. Give to God that which is God's,¹ and ascribe to thyself that which is thine own: that is to God give thanks for his grace; but know that to thyself alone guilt: and the fitting penalty of guilt is due. Set thyself always in the lowest place,² and the highest shall be given thee: for the top cannot stand without the bottom.

The chiefest Saints before God: are the least in their own eyes. And the more glorious they are: the humbler in themselves. Those that are full of truth and heavenly glory: are not desirous of vain glory. Those that are grounded and stablished in God: can no way be proud. And they that ascribe all unto God what good soever they have received, seek not glory one of another:³ but wish for that glory which is from God alone;

¹ Matt. xxii. 21.

² Luke xiv. 10.

³ John v. 44.

and desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves and in all His Saints : and always press towards the Same.¹

Be therefore thankful for the smallest gift : so shalt thou be meet to receive greater. Let the least be unto thee even as the greatest : yea the more despised as a special boon. If thou consider the dignity of the Giver : no gift will seem little or mean. For that is not little : which is given by God Most High. Yea if He give punishment and stripes, it should be thankfully taken:² because He doeth always for our salvation all that He suffers to happen unto us. He that desires to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace given : patient when it is taken away. Let him pray that it may return : let him be cautious and humble lest he lose it.

CHAPTER XI

OF THE FEWNESSE OF THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

JESUS has now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom : but few bearers of His Cross. He has many that long for consolation : but few

¹ *The Same* is printed with a capital letter, because there seems here to be a reference to Psal. iv. 9 (Vulgate), *In pace in Idipsum dormiam*. Both St. Augustine (*Conf. ix. 4, 7*) and a Kempis (*iv. 15 ad finem*) understand *Idipsum* as a title of God, *the Same, the Changeless*.

² *Job xiii. 15.*

that long for tribulation. He finds many companions of His table: but few of His fast. All desire to rejoice with Him: few are willing to suffer any thing for Him.

Many follow Jesus unto the breaking of bread: but few to the drinking of the cup of His passion.¹ Many reverence His miracles: few follow the ignominy of His Cross. Many love Jesus: so long as no adversities befall. Many praise and bless Him: so long as they receive consolations from Him. But if Jesus hide Himself and leave them but a little while:² they fall either into complaining or into great dejection.

But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus and not for some special comfort of their own: bless Him in all tribulation and distress of heart as well as in the dearest comfort.³ Yea though He should never choose to give them comfort; yet would they ever praise Him: and wish to be always giving thanks.

O how strong is the pure love of Jesus: which

¹ Matt. xx. 22. The many who followed to the breaking of bread are the Five Thousand. ² John xii. 36: xvi. 16.

³ Here follow in the autograph the words, *Et si Jesus uellet quod irent in infernum: ibi aequi contenti essent nec minimum curarent.* The pen has been run through them, but they are still legible. Thomas added these words as an expansion of what precedes, and then struck them out as too coarse an expression of the Mystic Paradox to suit his refined taste. Here we have a very striking sign that he was the author, not merely the copyist, of the autograph of 1441.

is alloyed with no self-interest or self-love. Are not all those to be called hirelings ; who are ever seeking consolations ? Do they not shew themselves lovers of themselves rather than of Christ ; who are always scheming their own profit and advantage ? Where shall one be found ; who will serve God for nought ? Seldom is any so spiritual : as to be stripped of all. For who can find one that is truly poor in spirit, and bared of all created things ? From afar yea from the ends of the earth is his price.¹

If a man give all his substance, yet is it nothing : and if he do great penance still it is little, and if he acquire all knowledge he is still far off : and if he have great virtue, and glowing devotion ; yet much is wanting : to wit one thing which is most necessary for him. What is that ? That having left all he leave himself and go wholly away from himself : and keep no vestige of self-love.² And when he has done all that he knows he ought to do, let him feel that he has done nothing : let him not highly prize what might be highly valued ; but let him call himself in truth an unprofitable servant : as the Truth saith. When you shall have done all that is commanded you : say, We are unprofitable servants.³ Then

¹ Prov. xxxi. 10 (Vulgate).

² Compare *Theol. Germ.*, xxii., *Be simply and wholly bereft of self.*

³ Luke xvii. 10.

may he be truly poor and naked in spirit: and say with the Prophet. I am alone and poor.¹

Yet no man richer none more powerful none more free than he, who can leave himself and all things: and set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE KING'S WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

I

TO many this seems a hard speech Deny thyself: take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.² But much harder will it be to hear that last word: Depart from me ye cursed into eternal fire.³ For they who now gladly hear and follow the word of the Cross: shall not then be afraid to hear of eternal damnation.

The Cross will be the sign in Heaven:⁴ when the Lord shall come to judgment. Then all the servants of the Cross who in their lifetime conformed themselves to the Crucified: shall draw near to Christ the Judge with great confidence.

Why then fear to take up the Cross; through which lies the road to the kingdom? In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life; in the Cross is protection from enemies: in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness; in the Cross

¹ Psal. xxv. (xxiv.) 16.

² Matt. xvi. 24: Luke ix. 23.

³ Matt. xxv. 41.

⁴ See the commentators on Matt. xxiv. 30

is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of Spirit : in the Cross the sum of virtue, in the Cross perfection of sanctity. There is no salvation for the soul nor hope of eternal life : but in the Cross. Take up therefore thy Cross and follow Jesus : and thou shalt go into life eternal. He went before bearing His Cross,¹ and died for thee on the Cross ; that thou also mayest bear thy Cross : and desire to die on the Cross. For if thou be dead with Him : thou shalt also live with Him. And if thou be partaker of His punishment : thou shalt be also of His glory.²

Lo in the Cross is all, and in dying is all ; and there is no other way to life and true inward peace : but the way of the holy Cross and of daily mortification. Walk where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt ; thou wilt find no higher way above, nor safer way below : than the way of the holy Cross. Dispose and order all things as thou wilt and seest ; yet shalt thou only learn that thou must always suffer, willingly or unwillingly : and so shalt thou always find the Cross.

For either in thy body thou shalt feel pain : or in thy soul thou shalt suffer tribulation of spirit. Sometimes thou shalt be forsaken of God, sometimes troubled by thy neighbour : and what is more often thou shalt be a burden to thyself ; neither canst thou be delivered or eased by any

¹ John xix. 17.

² Rom. vi. 8.

remedy or comfort: but so long as it pleases God thou must endure. For God will have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort; and, to submit thyself wholly to Him, and gather humility from tribulation.

No man hath so hearty a sense of the Passion of Christ: as he who hath suffered the like himself. The Cross therefore is always ready: and every where waits for thee. Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for go where thou wilt thou carriest thyself with thee: and shalt ever find thyself. Turn thyself upwards, turn thyself downwards; turn thyself outwards, turn thyself inwards: every where thou shalt find the Cross; and every where thou must needs keep patience: if thou wilt have inward peace, and earn an everlasting crown.

II

If thou carry the Cross cheerfully it will carry thee,¹ and lead thee to the desired end, namely where there shall be an end of suffering: though here there shall be none. If thou carry it unwillingly thou makest for thyself a burden, and addest to thy load: and yet thou must bear. If thou cast away one cross, without doubt thou shalt find another: and perhaps a heavier.

¹ There is a reference here to Thomas' Epigram on the Cross, which is quoted also below, iv. 56, see note there.

Thinkest thou to escape ; what no mortal could ever avoid ? Which of the Saints in the world was without a cross and tribulation ? For not even Jesus Christ our Lord was ever one hour without the anguish of Passion so long as He lived. Christ saith He must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead : and so enter into His glory.¹ And how dost thou seek any other way ; than this King's Way which is the way of the holy Cross ? Christ's whole life was a Cross and a Martyrdom : and dost thou seek rest and joy for thyself ? Thou art deceived thou art deceived if thou seek ought else than to suffer tribulations : for this whole mortal life is full of miseries and signed on every side with crosses.

And the higher a man hath mounted in the Spirit the heavier crosses he will often find : because the punishment of his exile increases with love.

III

Nevertheless this man though so many ways afflicted, is not without the refreshment of comfort : for he sees rich fruit accrue unto him by the enduring of his own cross. For whilst he willingly takes it up : all the burden of tribulation is turned into assurance of divine comfort.

¹ Luke xxiv. 26.

And the more the flesh is wasted by affliction: the more is the spirit strengthened by inward grace. And sometimes he is so comforted through desire of tribulation and adversity for his love of conformity to the Cross of Christ: that he would not choose to be without grief and tribulation; because he believes that he shall be dearer unto God: the more and the harder trials he can suffer for Him.

This is not the power of man but the grace of Christ: which can do and does so much in frail flesh; that what by nature it always abhors and flees from: by fervour of spirit it goes to meet and loves. It is not man's nature to carry the Cross, to love the Cross; to chasten the body and bring it into subjection;¹ to flee honours, cheerfully to suffer reproaches; to despise himself, and wish to be despised: to endure misfortune and loss, and to desire no prosperity in this world. If thou look to thyself: thou canst of thyself do nothing of the kind. But if thou trust in the Lord, courage shall be given thee from Heaven: and the world and the flesh shall be put under thy command. Neither shalt thou fear thy enemy the devil: if thou be armed with faith and signed with the Cross of Christ.

Set thyself therefore like a good and faithful servant of Christ to carry manfully the Cross

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

of thy Lord : who out of love was crucified for thee. Prepare thyself to bear many adversities and various troubles in this miserable life ; for so it will be with thee wheresoever thou art : and so surely thou shalt find it wheresoever thou hide. So it must be ; nor is there any means of escape from the tribulation of evil and from sorrow : but only to bear with thyself. Drink the Lord's cup with affection : if thou desire to be His friend and to have part with Him. Leave comforts to God : let Him do therein as seemeth Him good. Do thou set thyself to endure tribulations and count them the greatest comforts ; for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to deserve the glory which is to come :¹ although thou alone couldest endure them all.

IV

When thou shalt attain to this that tribulation shall seem sweet and savoury for Christ's sake ; then think it well with thee : for thou hast found Paradise upon earth. As long as it is grievous to thee to suffer and it is thy mind to flee ; so long shalt thou be ill at ease : and flight from tribulation will pursue thee every where. If thou dost set thyself to what thou oughtest

¹ Rom. viii. 18. Compare St. Bernard in *F. Annunt. B. M. V.*, serm. i. : *Jam uero de aeterna uita scimus, quia non sunt condignae passiones huius temporis ad futuram gloriam, nec si unus omnes sustineat.* H.

to be ; namely to suffering and dying ; it will quickly be better with thee and thou shalt find peace.

Although thou shouldest have been rapt even unto the third heaven¹ with Paul : thou art not therefore safe to suffer no harm. I will shew him saith Jesus : how great things he must suffer for my Name.² Suffering therefore still remains : if thou art minded to love Jesus and to serve him unceasingly.

O that thou wert worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus : how great glory would remain unto thyself ; what triumph would there be for all God's Saints : what edification also for thy neighbour. For all commend patience : few however are willing to suffer. With good reason oughtest thou cheerfully to suffer a little for Christ's sake : since many suffer much more for the world.

v

Know for certain : thou shouldest lead a dying life. And the more any man dies to himself : the more does he begin to live unto God. No man is fit to comprehend things heavenly : until he has submitted to bear adversities for Christ's sake.

Nothing is more pleasing to God nothing more

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 2.

² Acts ix. 16.

wholesome to thee in this world : than cheerfully to suffer for Christ. And if thou hadst the choice: thou shouldest elect to suffer adversities for Christ rather than to be refreshed with many consolations ; because thou wouldest thus be more like Christ: and more conformable to all the Saints. For our merit and the advance of our spiritual estate stands not in many delights and comforts : but rather in enduring great afflictions and tribulations to the end.

Indeed if there had been any thing better and more profitable to man's salvation than suffering : Christ would surely have shewn it by word and example. For both the disciples that followed Him, and all who desire to follow Him : He plainly exhorts to carry the Cross and saith. If any will come after Me : let him deny himself and take up his Cross and follow Me.

So when we have perused and searched all: be this the final conclusion. That through many tribulations: we must enter into the kingdom of God.¹

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

HERE END ADMONITIONS DRAWING TO
THE INNER LIFE

THIRD BOOK

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HERE BEGINS
A DEVOUT EXHORTATION
TO HOLY COMMUNION

[THIRD BOOK]

THE VOICE OF CHRIST

Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden: and I will refresh you saith the Lord.¹ The bread which I will give: is my Flesh for the life of the world.² Take and eat; this is My Body which shall be given for you: Do this in remembrance of Me.³ He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood: dwelleth in Me, and I in him.⁴ The words which I have spoken unto you: are Spirit and Life.⁵

CHAPTER I

WITH WHAT REVERENCE CHRIST OUGHT
TO BE RECEIVED

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

THESE are Thy words O Christ eternal Truth; though not uttered at one time: nor written in one place. Because therefore they are Thine and true: they are all thankfully and faithfully

¹ Matt. xi. 28.

² John vi. 51.

³ Matt. xxvi. 26: 1 Cor. xi. 24. ⁴ John vi. 56. ⁵ John vi. 63.

to be received by me. They are Thine and Thou hast uttered them ; and they are mine also : because Thou hast spoken them for my salvation. I receive them gladly from Thy mouth : that they may be the closer grafted in my heart. Those most gracious words embolden me : full as they are of sweetness and of love. But mine own offences make me afraid : and an unclean conscience drives me back from receiving so great Mysteries. The sweetness of Thy words invites me : but the multitude of my sins doth weigh me down.

Thou commandest me to come confidently unto Thee, if I would have part with Thee ; and to receive the food of immortality, if I would obtain eternal life and glory. Come unto Me sayest Thou all ye that labour and are heavy laden : and I will refresh you. O word sweet and friendly in a sinner's ear : that Thou O Lord my God shouldest invite the poor and needy to the Communion of Thy most holy Body.

But who am I Lord ; that I should dare to approach Thee ? Behold the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Thee ;¹ and Thou sayest Come ye all unto Me. What means this most gracious condescension ; and this so friendly invitation ? How shall I dare to come ; who know not any good in myself whereon I may presume ? How

¹ 1 Kings viii. 27.

shall I bring Thee into my house; who have so often offended Thy most benign countenance? Angels and Archangels stand in awe of Thee; holy and righteous men do fear Thee; and sayest Thou Come ye all unto Me?

Unless Thou Lord didst say this; who could believe it to be true? And unless Thou didst command; who could venture to draw near?

Behold just Noah laboured a hundred years¹ in the making of the Ark that he might be saved with few;² and how can I in one hour's space prepare myself, to receive with reverence the Maker of the world?

Moses Thy great servant and Thine especial friend made an ark of incorruptible wood,³ which also he covered with the finest gold, wherein to lay up the tables of the law; and shall I a corrupted creature dare so lightly to receive Thee the Maker of the Law and Giver of life?

Solomon the wisest of the kings of Israel bestowed seven years in building a magnifical Temple to the praise of Thy Name, and celebrated the feast of its dedication for eight days⁴ together, he offered a thousand peace-offerings, and solemnly set the Ark of the Covenant in the place prepared for it with the sound of trumpets and great joy;

¹ *A hundred years*; *cp. Gen. v. 32; vii. 6.* ² *1 Peter iii. 20.*

³ *Of incorruptible wood*, *Exodus xxv. 10.* *LXX.*

⁴ *2 Macc. ii. 12.*

and I unhappy and poorest of men how shall I bring Thee into my house, I that can scarce spend half an hour in devotion and would that I could but once spend half an hour in worthy manner ?

II

O my God how much did they strive to do to please Thee. Alas how little it is that I do : how short a time do I spend, when I prepare myself for Communion. Seldom am I wholly collected : very seldom cleansed from all distraction. And yet surely in the life-giving Presence of Thy Godhead, no unseemly thought should intrude ; no creature occupy my mind : for it is not an Angel, but the Lord of the Angels whom I am to receive as my Guest.

Yet very great is the difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and Thy most pure Body with Its unspeakable virtues ; between those legal sacrifices figures of things to come : and the True Sacrifice of Thy Body the fulfilment of all ancient sacrifices. Why then does not my heart burn more within me at Thine adorable Presence, why do I not prepare myself with greater solicitude to receive Thy holy things ; when those ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea kings also and princes with all the people, shewed such ardour of devotion to Thy divine service ?

III

Devout King David danced before the ark of God with all his might,¹ calling to mind² the benefits bestowed in days of old upon his forefathers : He made instruments² of sundry kinds ; he gave forth psalms, and appointed them to be chanted with joy : he also oftentimes himself sang to the harp, inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit ; he taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart : and with the voice of melody to bless and praise him every day. If so great devotion was then used and such celebration of divine praise was held, before the ark of the testament ; what reverence and devotion ought now to be displayed by me and all Christian people in presence of the Sacrament, in receiving the most excellent Body of Christ.

IV

Many run to divers places to visit the relics of Saints : and hear with wonder of their deeds, gaze upon the spacious buildings of their temples ; and kiss their sacred bones wrapped up in silk and gold : and behold Thou art present with me here upon the altar my God Holy of holies, Creator of men and Lord of Angels.

Often in such spectacles men are moved by curiosity and the novelty of strange sights ; and

¹ 2 Sam. vi. 14.

² Amos vi. 5.

little fruit of amendment is carried home: particularly when they so heedlessly wander about without true contrition. But here in the Sacrament of the Altar Thou art wholly present my God the Man Christ Jesus; here too a rich harvest of eternal salvation is reaped: as oft as thou art worthily and devoutly received. But to this we are drawn not by frivolity or curiosity or sensuality: but by firm faith devout hope and sincere charity.

v

O God invisible Creator of the world, how wonderfully dost Thou deal with us; how sweetly and graciously dost thou arrange for Thine elect: to whom Thou offerest Thyself to be received in this Sacrament. For this passes all understanding: this specially draws the hearts of the devout and enkindles their desire. For even Thy true faithful ones, who give up their whole life to amendment: from this most precious Sacrament often receive much grace of devotion and love of virtue.

vi

O the admirable and hidden grace of this Sacrament; which only the faithful ones of Christ do know: but the unbelieving and slaves of sin cannot experience. In this Sacrament spiritual grace is conferred; and lost virtue is restored

in the soul: and the beauty which sin had disfigured returns. This grace is sometimes so great: that out of the fulness of devotion here given not the mind only but the weak body¹ also feels great increase of strength bestowed on it.

VII

Yet ought we deeply to lament and mourn for our coldness and negligence; that we are not drawn with greater affection to receive Christ: in whom stands all the hope of those that are to be saved and all their merit. For He is our sanctification and redemption: He is the consolation of pilgrims and the eternal fruition of Saints. We ought therefore deeply to lament that many do so little consider this salutary Mystery: which causes joy in Heaven, and preserves the whole world.

Alas for the blindness and hardness of the heart of man, that it does not more tenderly cherish so unspeakable a Gift: and even through daily use sinks into listless disregard of it. For if this most holy Sacrament were celebrated in one place only, and were consecrated by one only priest in the world; with what longing dost thou think would men turn to that place and towards such a priest of God: that they might behold

¹ Cp. Wilson, *Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 243, *Et salutem nobis mentis et corporis operare placatus.*

the celebration of these divine Mysteries. But now many are made priests, and in many places Christ is offered; that the grace and love of God to man may appear the greater: the more widely this sacred Communion is spread over the world.

Thanks be unto Thee O good Jesu eternal Shepherd; for that thou hast vouchsafed to refresh us poor exiles with Thy precious Body and Blood: and even to invite us to the receiving of these Mysteries by a message from Thine own mouth saying. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden: and I will refresh you.

CHAPTER II

THAT THE GREAT GOODNESS AND LOVE OF GOD IS DISPLAYED TO MAN IN THE SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

TRUSTING in Thy goodness and great mercy O Lord, I draw near a sick man to the Saviour: hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of life, a needy wretch to the King of Heaven; a servant to his Lord, a creature to the Creator: a desolate soul to my tender Comforter.

But whence is this to me; that thou shouldst

come unto me?¹ what am I, that thou shouldest grant Thine own self unto me? How dare a sinner appear before Thee; and how canst Thou deign to come unto a sinner? Thou knowest Thy servant: and knowest that he has in him no good thing, for which Thou shouldest grant him this. I confess therefore mine own vileness; I acknowledge Thy goodness, I praise Thy tender mercy: and give Thee thanks for Thy transcendent love. For Thou doest this for Thine own sake, not for any merits of mine; that Thy goodness may be the better known unto me, Thy love more abundantly poured in: and Thy humility more perfectly commended.

Since therefore it is Thy pleasure, and Thou hast commanded that so it should be; Thy condescension is also dearly pleasing unto me: and O that my iniquity may be no hindrance.

O most sweet and most benign Jesu what reverence and thanksgiving together with unending praise is due unto Thee for the receiving of Thy sacred Body: whose majesty no mortal man is able to express.

But on what shall my thoughts dwell at this Communion in thus approaching unto my Lord whom I am not able duly to honour: whom yet I devoutly long to receive? What can I think on better and more wholesome; than utterly to

¹ Luke i. 43.

humble myself before Thee, and to exalt Thine infinite goodness above me? I praise Thee my God and exalt Thee for ever: I despise myself and cast myself down before Thee into the deep of mine own vileness. Behold Thou art the Holy of holies: and I the foulest of sinners. Behold Thou bimest Thyself down unto me: who am not worthy to look up at Thee. Behold Thou comest unto me: Thou wilt be with me, Thou invitest me to Thy banquet. Thou wilt give me heavenly food: and bread of Angels to eat.¹ Which is indeed no other than Thyself the Living Bread which camest down from Heaven: and givest life unto the world.²

Behold whence love comes forth; what condescension shines upon us: what thanks and praises are due unto Thee for this. O how salutary and profitable was Thy counsel when Thou didst ordain It; how sweet and pleasant the banquet: when Thou gavest Thyself to be our food. O how admirable is Thy working O Lord; how mighty is Thy power: how infallible Thy truth. For Thou didst speak and all things were made:³ and this was done which Thou commandedst. A great marvel it is and worthy of all belief, and passing man's understanding; that Thou O Lord my God, True God and man

¹ Psal. lxxviii. (lxxvii.) 25.

² John vi. 33, 51.

³ Psal. cxlviii. 5.

art contained wholly beneath a small form of Bread and Wine: and art eaten yet not consumed by him that receives Thee. Thou Lord of the universe who needest no man art pleased to dwell in us by means of Thy Sacrament: Keep my heart and body undefiled; that with a cheerful and pure conscience I may be able frequently to celebrate and to receive to my everlasting health Thy Mysteries: which Thou didst specially ordain and institute for Thine own honour and for a never-ceasing memorial.

II

Rejoice O my soul and give thanks unto God for so noble a gift and so precious a consolation: left unto thee in this vale of tears. For as often as thou callest to mind this Mystery and receivest the Body of Christ; so often dost thou enact the work of thy redemption:¹ and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ. For the love of Christ is never diminished: and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore thou oughtest to dispose thyself hereunto by constant fresh renewing of thy mind: and to weigh with attentive consideration the great Mystery of salvation. So great so new and so joyful ought it to seem unto thee, when

¹ Compare the *Secreta* on p. 227 of Wilson's *Gelasian Sacramentary*, *Quia quoties huius hostiae commemoratio celebratur, opus nostrae redemptionis exercetur.*

thou celebratest or hearest Mass ; as if on this same day Christ first descending into the womb of the Virgin were become man : or hanging on the Cross did suffer and die for the salvation of mankind.

CHAPTER III

THAT IT IS PROFITABLE TO COMMUNICATE OFTEN THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

BEHOLD Lord I come unto Thee ; that it may be well with me through Thy gift, and that I may rejoice in Thy holy feast : which Thou God hast in Thy goodness prepared for the poor.¹ Behold in Thee is all that I can or may desire ; Thou art my Salvation and my Redemption : my Hope and my Strength, my Honour and Glory. Rejoice therefore this day the soul of Thy servant : for unto Thee Lord Jesu have I lifted up my soul.²

I long to receive Thee now with devotion and reverence ; I desire to bring Thee into my house : that with Zacchæus I may be counted worthy to be blessed by Thee : and numbered amongst the sons of Abraham.³ My soul craves for Thy

¹ Psal. Ixviii. 10 (lxvii. 11).

² Psal. lxxxvi. (lxxxv.) 4.

³ Luke xix. 9.

Body: my heart longs to be united with Thee. Give Thyselvē to me and it suffices: for besides Thee no comfort avails. Without Thee I cannot be: and without Thy visitation I have no power to live.

And therefore I must often draw near unto Thee: and receive Thee for the medicine of my salvation; lest haply I faint in the way: if I be robbed of heavenly Food.¹ For so most merciful Jesus when thou wast preaching to the people and curing divers diseases: Thou once didst say. I will not send them home fasting: lest they faint in the way.² Deal Thou therefore in like manner with me: Thou who hast vouchsafed to leave Thyselvē in the Sacrament for the comfort of the faithful. For Thou art the sweet refreshment of the soul; and he that eats Thee worthily: shall be partaker and heir of eternal glory.

It is indeed necessary for me who so often stumble and sin, so quickly wax dull and faint; that by frequent prayer and confession and holy receiving of Thy Body I renew cleanse and kindle myself: lest haply by too long abstaining I drift away from my holy purpose. For the imaginations of man are prone unto evil from his youth;³ and unless the divine medicine help him: by-and-

¹ Cp. *Repleti alimonia caelesti* in the Post-communion for the *De Inuentione Sanctae Crucis*. Wilson, *Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 173.

² Mark i. 34: Matt. xv. 32, combined.

³ Gen. viii. 21.

by he falls away to worse. Holy Communion therefore draws us back from evil: and strengthens us in good. For if I be now so often negligent and cold when I communicate or celebrate; what would become of me if I received not this remedy nor sought after so great a help? And although I be not fit nor well prepared to celebrate every day; I will endeavour notwithstanding at due times to receive the divine Mysteries: and partake of so great a grace. For this is the one chief consolation of the faithful soul so long as it is on pilgrimage away from Thee in this mortal body:¹ that remembering its God, it should often receive its Beloved with devout mind.

II

O wonderful condescension of Thy tender mercy towards us;² that Thou Lord God Creator and Giver of Life to all Spirits, dost deign to come unto a poor soul: and with Thy whole Deity and Humanity to satisfy its hunger. O happy mind and blessed soul; which is worthy to receive Thee Lord God with devout affection: and in so receiving Thee to be full of spiritual joy. O how great a Lord does it entertain; how beloved a Guest does it harbour, how delightful a

¹ 2 Cor. v. 6 (Vulgate).

² *O mira circa nos tuae pietatis dignatio.* From the canticle *Exultet* used at the *Benedictio Cerei in Sabbato Sancto*.

Companion does it receive : how faithful a Friend does it welcome ; how lovely and noble a Spouse does it embrace : even Him who is to be loved before all that are beloved and above all that can be desired.

O Thou my most sweet Beloved let Heaven and earth and all their glory be silent before Thy Face ; for what praise and beauty soever they have, is received from Thy bounteous condescension : nor shall they ever equal the beauty of Thy Name, whose wisdom is beyond all number.¹

CHAPTER IV

THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED UPON
THEM THAT COMMUNICATE DEVOUTLY

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

O LORD my God, prevent Thy servant with the blessings of Thy sweetness :² that I may deserve to approach worthily and devoutly to Thy glorious Sacrament. Stir up my heart toward Thee : and set me free from heavy listlessness. Visit me with Thy salvation³ that I may taste in spirit Thy sweetness : which plentifully lies hid in this Sacrament as in a fountain. Enlighten also mine eyes to behold so great a

¹ Psal. cxlvii. (cxlvii.) 5. ² Psal. xxi. 3 (xx. 4). ³ Psal. cxi. (cv.) 4.

Mystery : and strengthen me with undoubting faith to believe it. For it is Thy work : and no human power ; Thy sacred institution : not man's invention. For of himself no man is able to comprehend and understand these things : which transcend even the subtle mind of Angels. What portion then of so high and sacred a secret ; shall I unworthy sinner dust and ashes be able to search out and comprehend ?

Lord in the simplicity of my heart with a good firm faith and at Thy command I draw near unto Thee with hope and reverence ; and I do truly believe : that Thou art here present in this Sacrament both God and Man. Thy will therefore is that I should receive Thee : and that I should unite myself unto Thee in charity. Wherefore I implore Thy mercy, and do crave Thy special grace to this end ; that I may be wholly melted and overflow with love towards Thee : and never hereafter tamper¹ with any consolation which comes not from Thee. For this most high and noble Sacrament, is the health of soul and body ; the medicine for all spiritual languor : hereby my vices are cured, my passions bridled ; my temptations overcome, or weakened : greater grace is infused, virtue begun is increased ; faith is confirmed, hope strengthened : and charity kindled and enlarged.

¹ Tamper, or meddle with. See Ducange, *Intromittere*.

II

For Thou hast bestowed and still oftentimes dost bestow many benefits in this Sacrament upon Thy beloved ones that communicate devoutly O my God, Protector of my soul :¹ Restorer of human weakness, and Giver of all inward consolation.

For Thou impartest unto them much comfort against every variety of tribulation ; and from the depth of their own dejection liftest them up to hope in thy protection : and dost inwardly recreate and enlighten them with new grace ; so that they who at first and before Communion felt themselves anxious and heartless : afterwards being refreshed with Heavenly Meat and Drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And Thou dealest with such husbandry with Thine elect : in order that they may truly acknowledge and clearly learn how great is their own infirmity, and what goodness and grace they obtain from Thee ; for of themselves they are cold hard and undevout : but by Thee they are enabled to become fervent cheerful and devout. For who is there that approaching humbly unto the fountain of sweetness ; carries not away from thence some little sweetness ? Or who standing near a blazing fire, receives not some small

¹ Psal. liii. 4 (Vulgate).

warmth therefrom? And Thou art a fountain always full and overflowing: a fire ever burning, and never going out.

Wherefore if I am not permitted to draw out of the full fountain nor to drink my fill: I will notwithstanding set my lips to the mouth of this heavenly conduit; that I may receive from thence at least some little drop to allay my thirst: and be not utterly parched. And though I cannot as yet be altogether heavenly nor burn like Cherubim and Seraphim;¹ yet will I endeavour to apply myself to devotion and prepare my heart: that I may obtain if it be but some tiny flame of divine fire by the humble receiving of this life-giving Sacrament.

But whatsoever is wanting in me O Merciful Jesu most Holy Saviour; do Thou bountifully and graciously supply in my behalf: Thou who hast deigned to call all unto Thee saying. Come unto Me all ye that travail and are heavy laden: and I will refresh you.²

I indeed travail in the sweat of my brow,³ I am racked with grief of heart: I am burdened with

¹ *Nec dum . . . tam ignitus ut Cherubim et Seraphim esse possum.* Compare Dionysius Areop. *Cael. Hier.* i. 13 (in the version of Scotus Erigena); *Deinde easdem sanctissimorum Seraphim edoctus est deiformes uirtutes, sacra quidem ipsorum cognominatione, quod est ignitum.* The fiery Seraphim were a favourite type of illumination with the Mystics.

² Matt. xi. 28.

³ Gen. iii. 19.

sins, I am troubled with temptations; I am entangled and oppressed with many evil passions: and there is none to help, none to deliver and save, but Thou O Lord God my Saviour; to whom I commit myself and all that is mine: that Thou mayest keep watch over me and bring me safe to life eternal.

Receive me for the honour and glory of Thy Name: Thou who hast prepared Thy Body and Blood to be my meat and drink. Grant O Lord God of my salvation: that with the frequenting of Thy Mystery the zeal of my devotion may increase.¹

CHAPTER V

OF THE DIGNITY OF THIS SACRAMENT AND OF THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

IF thou hadst the purity of Angels and the sanctity of Saint John Baptist: thou wouldest not be worthy to receive or to touch this Sacrament. For this is not due to the deserts of men, that man should consecrate and handle the Sacrament of Christ: and receive for food the bread of Angels.²

¹ *Cp.* the Post-communion for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, *ut cum frequentatione mysterii crescat nostrae salutis effectus*, and Wilson, *Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 216.

² *Psal. lxxviii. (lxxvii.) 25.*

Grand is this ministry, great too is the dignity of Priests: to whom has been granted that which is not permitted to Angels. For none but Priests duly ordained in the Church: have power to celebrate and to consecrate the Body of Christ.

The Priest is indeed the minister of God: using the word of God by God's command and appointment. Nevertheless God is there the principal Author and invisible Worker; to whom all that He wills is subordinate: and all that He commands is obedient. Thou oughtest then to trust God Almighty in this most excellent Sacrament: more than thine own sense or any visible sign. And therefore with fear and reverence: must thou approach this work.

Take diligent heed unto thyself:¹ and see what That is whereof the ministry is delivered unto thee by the laying on of the Bishop's hand. Behold thou art made a priest: and consecrated to celebrate. See now that thou offer sacrifice to God faithfully and devoutly and at fit opportunities: and bear thyself without reproach. Thou hast not lightened thy burden; but art now bound with a straiter band of discipline: and art obliged to a greater perfection of holiness. A Priest ought to be adorned with all virtues: and to set example of good life to others. His conversation should not be in the popular and common

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

ways of mankind: but with the Angels in Heaven, or with perfect men on earth.

A Priest clad in sacred garments is Christ's deputy: that with supplication and humility he may beseech God for himself and for the whole people. He has before him and behind the sign of the Lord's Cross: that he may continually be reminded of the Passion of Christ. He wears the Cross before him on the chasuble: that he may diligently look on Christ's footsteps and earnestly study to follow them. Behind he is signed with the Cross: that he may cheerfully endure for God's sake any evils inflicted on him by others. Before him he bears the Cross: that he may mourn for his own sins, behind him, that he may with sympathy weep over the faults of others also: and know that he has been placed in the midst between God and the sinner; and that he should not flag in prayer and holy oblation: till he prevail to obtain grace and mercy. When a Priest celebrates he honours God: rejoices Angels, edifies the Church; helps the living, gives rest to the dead: and makes himself partaker of all good things.

CHAPTER VI

AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING EXERCISE
BEFORE COMMUNION

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WHEN I weigh Thy dignity O Lord and mine own vileness : I exceedingly tremble, and am confounded within myself. For if I come not, I fly from life ; and if I unworthily intrude myself : I incur displeasure.

What therefore shall I do O my God ; my Helper and my Counsellor in all necessity ? Teach Thou me the right way ; appoint me some brief exercise : suitable to Holy Communion. For it is good for me to know, how with devotion and reverence I should prepare my heart for Thee, for receiving Thy Sacrament to my soul's health : or even for celebrating so great and divine a Sacrifice ?

CHAPTER VII

OF SEARCHING OUR OWN CONSCIENCE AND
OF PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I

ABOVE all things, with exceeding humility of heart and with suppliant reverence, with full faith and dutiful anxiety for God's honour :

ought God's Priest to draw nigh to celebrate to handle, and to receive this Sacrament. Examine diligently thy conscience: and to the utmost of thy power purify and make it clear with true contrition and humble confession; so that thou keep or know of no burden that may breed in thee remorse: and hinder free access. Think with displeasure of all thy sins in general: and more particularly bewail and lament thy daily transgressions. And if time allows: confess unto God in the secret of thine heart all the wretchedness of thy passions.

Lament and bewail that thou art yet so carnal and worldly; so unmortified in thy passions: so full of the impulses of lusts, so unguarded in thy outward senses; so often entangled with many vain fancies: so much inclined to outward things, so careless of things inward; so frivolous in laughter and looseness: so hard against tears and compunction; so eager for ease and pleasures of the flesh: so dull to strictness and zeal; so keen to hear what is new and see what is fair: so slack to embrace what is humble and mean; so covetous of amassing: so niggardly in giving, so close in keeping; so heedless in speech: so incontinent in silence; so unstudied in manners so restless in conduct: so eager about food, so deaf to the Word of God; so swift to rest so slow to labour: so wakeful for gossip, so drowsy at sacred vigils;

so impatient for the end, so wandering in attention: so negligent in keeping the hours, so cold in celebrating, so dry in communicating; so soon distracted, so seldom fully self-collected: so suddenly moved to anger, so quick to take offence; so ready to judge, so severe to reprove: so joyful at prosperity, so weak in adversity; so often making many good resolutions: and yet accomplishing so little.

These and other thy defects being confessed and bewailed with sorrow and great displeasure at thine own infirmity; make thou a firm resolution to be always amending thy life: and making progress towards the better. Then with full resignation and entire will offer up thyself to the honour of My name a perpetual whole burnt offering on the altar of thy heart: faithfully committing unto Me thy body and soul; and thus mayest thou be accounted worthy to draw near to offer sacrifice unto God: and to receive the Sacrament of My Body to thy soul's health.

II

For there is no worthier oblation nor greater satisfaction for the washing away of sin: than to offer oneself unto God purely and wholly with the oblation of Christ's Body in Mass and Communion.

When a man shall have done what lieth in him,

and shall be truly penitent ; how often soever he shall come to Me for pardon and grace : as I live saith the Lord who will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live ;¹ I will not remember his sins any more :² but they shall all be forgiven him.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE OBLIGATION OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS
AND OF RESIGNATION OF OURSELVES

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

AS I of Mine own will did offer up Myself unto God the Father for thy sins with hands stretched out on the cross and body laid bare ; so that nothing remained in Me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of God : so oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto Me every day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation with all thy strength and affections as inwardly as thou canst.

What do I require of thee more ; than that thou study to resign thyself entirely unto Me ? Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself I heed not : for I seek not thy gift but thee. As it would not suffice thee to have all but Me : so whatsoever thou givest cannot please Me if thou

¹ Ez. xxxiii. 11.² Ez. xviii. 22 : Is. xliv. 25.

offer not thyself. Offer up thyself unto Me and give thyself wholly for God: and thy offering shall be acceptable.

Behold I offered Myself up wholly unto My Father for thee: I have given also my whole Body and Blood for thy food; that I might be wholly thine: and that thou mightest continue Mine to the end. But if thou stand upon thyself and dost not offer thyself up freely unto My will; the oblation is not complete: nor will there be full union between us. Therefore a free offering up of thyself into the hands of God ought to go before all thy works: if thou wilt obtain freedom and grace.

For this is why so few are made illuminated and inwardly free: because they cannot wholly deny themselves.

My sentence standeth sure: Unless a man forsake all: he cannot be my disciple.¹ If thou therefore desire to be My disciple: offer up thyself unto Me with all thy affections.

¹ Luke xiv. 33.

CHAPTER IX

THAT WE OUGHT TO OFFER UP OURSELVES
AND ALL THAT IS OURS UNTO GOD
AND TO PRAY FOR ALL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

LORD, Thine are all things: in heaven and in earth. I desire to offer up myself unto Thee as a freewill-offering: and to continue Thine for ever. Lord in simplicity of heart I offer myself unto Thee this day to be Thy servant for ever: for obedience and for a sacrifice of perpetual praise. Receive me with this holy Oblation of Thy precious Body; which I offer to Thee this day in the presence of Angels invisibly attending: that it may be for the salvation of myself and of all Thy people.

II

Lord all my sins and offences which I have committed before Thee and Thy Holy Angels from the day wherein I first could sin even to this hour I offer unto Thee on Thy propitious altar: that Thou mayest consume and burn them one and all with the fire of Thy love, and wash out all the stains of my sins and cleanse my conscience from all offence; and restore to me

Thy grace which I have lost by sin, fully forgiving me all: and admitting me mercifully to the kiss of peace.

What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and bewail them; and unceasingly entreat Thy propitiation? I entreat Thee hear me propitiously: when I stand before Thee my God. All my sins are exceedingly displeasing to me: I would never more commit them; but for them I do grieve and will grieve as long as I live: being ready to do penance, and to the utmost of my power to make satisfaction.

Forgive me O God forgive me my sins for the sake of Thy Name: save my soul which Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood. Behold I commit myself unto Thy mercy; I resign myself into Thy hands: deal with me according to Thy goodness not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

III

I offer up also unto Thee all that is good in me small and imperfect though it be; in order that Thou mayest amend and sanctify it: that Thou mayest look on it with favour and make it acceptable unto Thee; and always draw it on to better: and bring me also slothful and unprofitable creature as I am to a blessed and praiseworthy end.

IV

Moreover I offer up unto Thee all the pious desires of devout persons ; the needs of parents, friends, brethren, sisters and all who are dear unto me, and who have done good to myself or others for Thy love : and who have desired and begged me to say prayers and masses for themselves and all their families ; whether they are still living in the flesh or have already been taken from the world : that all may feel the present help of Thy grace, the aid of Thy consolation, protection from dangers, deliverance from pains ; and that being rescued from all evils : they may with joy return glorious thanksgivings unto Thee.

V

I offer unto Thee also my prayers and sacrifices of intercession, for those especially who have in any matter hurt grieved or spoken evil of me, or who have done me any damage or displeasure ; for all those also whom at any time I have vexed troubled burdened and scandalised by words or deeds knowingly or in ignorance : that Thou wouldest grant us all alike pardon for our sins and for our offences against each other.

Take away from our hearts Lord all suspicion indignation wrath and contention ; and whatsoever may hurt charity : and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy Lord have mercy, on those that crave Thy mercy, give grace to them that need ; and make us such, that we may be worthy to enjoy Thy grace : and go forward to life eternal. Amen.

CHAPTER X

THAT THE HOLY COMMUNION IS NOT
LIGHTLY TO BE FORBORNE
THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I

OFTEN shouldest thou hasten back to the Fountain of grace, and of divine mercy : to the Fountain of goodness and of all purity ; that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices : and deserve to be made stronger and more vigilant against all the temptations and deceits of the devil.

The Enemy knowing that exceeding great profit and healing is found in Holy Communion : endeavours his utmost by all means and occasions to deter and hinder the faithful and devout.

For some persons when they are preparing to fit themselves for Holy Communion : suffer from the insinuations of Satan worse than before. That wicked spirit, as it is written in Job comes amongst the sons of God :¹ to trouble them with

¹ Job i. 6.

his accustomed malice or to frighten and perplex them ; that so he may lessen their affection or by direct assaults take away their faith : in the hope that they may altogether abandon Communion, or come to it with coldness. But no heed at all should be taken of his wiles and delusions be they never so filthy and hideous : but all such imaginations are to be turned back upon his own head. Thou must despise and laugh the wretch to scorn ; nor on account of his assaults or for the troubles which he causes : shouldest thou omit the Holy Communion.

A frequent hindrance also is excessive striving for devotion : and anxiety about making confession. Follow thou the counsel of the wise, and lay aside anxiety and scrupulousness ; for it hinders the grace of God : and spoils devotion of mind. Do not omit the Holy Communion, for every little vexation and trouble ; but go the sooner to confession : and cheerfully forgive others all their offences. And if thou hast offended any ; humbly crave pardon : and God will readily forgive thee.

II

What avails it to delay long thy confession ? or to put off Holy Communion ? cleanse thyself as soon as may be : spit out the poison with all speed, make haste to apply the antidote : and

thou shalt find it better than if thou long delay. If thou omit it to-day for one cause, perhaps to-morrow a greater may occur to thee ; and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from Communion : and grow more unfit. As quickly as ever thou canst shake thyself free from thy present heaviness and sloth ; for it is of no use to be anxious for long troubled for long : and for every-day hindrances to shut thyself out from divine service. Yea it is most hurtful to push off Communion for long : for it usually brings on heavy lethargy.

Alas some from coldness and lack of discipline are glad to delay confession ; and wish to defer Holy Communion : lest they should be obliged to keep a stricter watch over themselves. O how poor is their love how weak their devotion : who so easily put off Holy Communion. How happy is he and how acceptable to God : who so lives and in such purity guards his conscience ; that he is ready and well-disposed to communicate even every day: if it were in his power, and might be done without notice.

If a person do sometimes abstain out of humility or for some lawful cause preventing him : he is to be commended for reverence. But if drowsiness have crept over him ; he must rouse himself and do his best: and the Lord will assist his desire for the sake of his good will which He

specially regards. But when he is lawfully hindered, he will always have a good will and pious intention to communicate: and so shall he not miss the fruit of the Sacrament.

For every devout person every day and every hour can profitably and unimpeded draw near to Christ in spiritual Communion: and yet on certain days and at time appointed he ought to receive the Body of his Redeemer, sacramentally with affectionate reverence; and rather seek the honour and glory of God, than his own comfort.

For he communicates mystically and is invisibly refreshed; as often as he devoutly calls to mind the mystery of the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ: and is kindled with love of Him.

He that prepares not himself, except when a festival draws near or when custom compels: shall often be unprepared.

Blessed is he that offers himself up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord: as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be not too slow nor yet hurried in celebrating: but keep the good accustomed manner of those with whom thou livest. Thou oughtest not to cause discomfort or weariness to others; but keep the common way according to the appointment of our fathers: and consider the profit of others rather than thine own devotion or feelings.

CHAPTER XI

THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST AND HOLY
SCRIPTURE ARE MOST NECESSARY
UNTO A FAITHFUL SOUL

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

I

O SWEETEST Lord Jesus how great is the joy of the devout soul that feasts with Thee at Thy banquet; where there is set to be eaten no other food: but Thyself his one Beloved, desirable above all the desires of his heart. To me truly it would be sweet in Thy presence to pour forth tears from my inmost heart: and with the grateful Magdalene to wash Thy feet with tears.¹ But where is that devotion; where that flood of holy tears? Surely in the sight of Thee, and Thy holy Angels my whole heart should burn: and weep for joy.

For in this Sacrament I have Thee truly present: though hidden under another form. For to look upon Thee in Thine own Divine brightness, mine eyes could not endure: nor could the whole world exist in the splendour of the glory of Thy Majesty. Herein then Thou hast compassion on my infirmity: that thou dost veil thyself under a Sacrament.

¹ Luke vii. 38.

Him do I truly possess and adore whom Angels adore in Heaven;¹ I for a while as yet by faith: but they by sight and without a veil. I ought to be content with the light of true faith, and therein to walk till the day of eternal brightness shall dawn: and the shadows of figures pass away.² But when that which is perfect is come,³ the use of Sacraments shall cease; because the Blessed in heavenly glory, need not any sacramental medicine: for they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face;⁴ and being transformed from brightness unto brightness⁵ of the unfathomable Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh as He was from the beginning and abideth for ever.⁶

Whilst I think on these wonders, all spiritual comfort whatever becomes a heavy weariness unto me; because as long as I behold not my Lord openly in His glory: I count as nothing all that I see or hear in this world. Thou art my witness O God; that nothing can comfort me, no creature satisfy: but only Thou my God whom I yearn to contemplate in eternity. But this cannot be while I linger in this mortality; therefore I must frame myself to much patience: and submit myself to Thee in every desire.

¹ Heb. i. 6.

² Song of Songs ii. 16, 17.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 10.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

⁶ John i. 14: 1 John i. 1: 1 Pet. i. 25.

For even Thy Saints Lord who now triumph with Thee in the kingdom of heaven : whilst they lived waited for the coming of Thy glory in faith and in great patience.¹ What they believed I believe ; what they hoped I hope : where they are, I trust by Thy grace that I shall come. Meantime I will walk in faith² strengthened by the examples of the Saints ; I will take also holy books for my comfort and for the mirror of my life : and above all these Thy most Holy Body for a sovereign remedy and refuge.

II

For I find two things to be very particularly necessary for me in this life: without which this miserable life would be insupportable unto me. So long as I am kept in the prison of this body, I confess that I need two things: food and light.

Therefore in pity for my weakness Thou hast given Thy sacred Body for the refreshment of my mind and body: and Thy word Thou hast set as a lamp unto my feet.³ Without these two I could not live well ; for the word of God is the light of my soul : and Thy Sacrament the Bread of Life.

These also may be called two tables⁴ set on the one side and on the other : in the treasury of Holy Church. One table is that of the Sacred

¹ Heb. vi. 12 : Titus ii. 13, combined.

² 2 Cor. v. 7.

³ Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 105.

⁴ Ez. xl. 38, 39.

Altar having the holy Bread that is the precious Body of Christ ; the other is that of the Divine Law containing holy doctrine : teaching men right faith, and stedfastly leading them onward to that within the veil where is the Holy of holies.¹

III

Thanks be unto Thee Lord Jesu Light of eternal Light, for that table of sacred doctrine : which Thou hast laid for us by Thy servants the Prophets and Apostles, and other teachers. Thanks be unto Thee Creator and Redeemer of mankind, who to manifest Thy love to the whole world hast prepared a great supper ; wherein Thou hast set before us to be eaten not the typical lamb, but Thine own most sacred Body and Blood : rejoicing all the faithful with this sacred banquet, and intoxicating them with the Cup of Salvation ;² in which are all the delights of Paradise : and the holy Angels do feast with us, but with a happier sweetness.

IV

O how great and honourable is the office of priests : to whom it is given with sacred words to consecrate the Lord of Glory ; with their lips to bless, with their hands to hold, with their own mouth to receive, and to administer to others.

¹ Heb. vi. 19 : ix. 3.

² Psal. xxii. 5 (Vulgate) : *calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est.*

O how clean should be those hands, how pure will be the mouth, how holy the body, how unspotted the heart of the priest: into whom the Author of purity so often enters. From the mouth of the priest who so often receiveth the Sacrament of Christ: should proceed nothing but what is holy no word but what is decorous and profitable. Simple and chaste should be the eyes: that are wont to behold the Body of Christ. Pure and lifted up to heaven should be the hands: that use to touch the Creator of heaven and earth. Unto the priest especially it is said in the Law. Be ye holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.¹

O Almighty God do Thou assist us with Thy grace; that we who have undertaken the office of the priesthood: may be able to wait on Thee worthily and devoutly in all purity and with a good conscience. And if we cannot walk in such innocency of life as we ought to do; grant to us at least worthily to lament the sins which we have committed: and in the spirit of humility and the purpose of a good will to serve Thee more earnestly for the time to come.

¹ Lev. xix. 2: xx. 26.

CHAPTER XII

THAT HE WHO IS ABOUT TO COMMUNICATE
WITH CHRIST OUGHT TO PREPARE HIMSELF
WITH GREAT DILIGENCE

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

I AM the Lover of purity : and the Giver of all sanctity. I seek a pure heart : and there is the place of My rest. Make ready for Me a large upper room furnished : and I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples.¹

If thou wilt have Me come unto thee, and remain with thee ; purge out the old leaven :² and cleanse the habitation of thy heart. Shut out the whole world and all the rout of vices ; sit thou as it were a sparrow alone upon the house-top :³ and think over thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul. For every lover, prepares the best and fairest place for his beloved : for hereby is known the affection of him that entertains his beloved.

Know thou notwithstanding that no merit of any action of thine is able to make this preparation : although thou shouldest prepare thyself a whole year together and have nothing else in thy mind. But out of My mere goodness and grace thou art permitted to approach My table ; as if a

¹ Mark xiv. 12-15 : Luke xxii. 7-12.

² 1 Cor. v. 7.

³ Psal. cii. 7 (ci. 8).

beggar were called to a rich man's dinner, and he had no other return to make to him for his bounty: but to humble himself and give him thanks. Do what lies in thee and do it diligently; not for habit not for obligation: but with fear and reverence, and affection receive the Body of thy beloved Lord God who deigns to come unto thee. I am He that called thee, I commanded it to be done; I will supply what is wanting in thee: come and receive Me.

When I bestow on thee the grace of devotion give thanks to thy God; not because thou art worthy: but because I have had mercy on thee. If thou have it not but rather dost feel thyself dry; be instant in prayer, sigh and knock: and give not over until thou art meet to receive some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou hast need of Me: I have no need of thee. Neither comest thou to sanctify Me: but I come to sanctify thee and make thee better. Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by Me and united unto Me; that thou mayest receive new grace: and be kindled anew to amendment. See thou neglect not this grace; but prepare thy heart with all diligence: and receive thy Beloved into thee.

Thou oughtest however not only to prepare thyself to devotion before Communion: but carefully also to keep thyself therein after thou hast

received the Sacrament. Nor is less watchfulness exacted afterwards, than devout preparation before. For good guard afterwards: is again the best preparation for obtaining greater grace. For it will make thee very ill disposed: if thou yield thyself up immediately to outward comforts. Beware of much talk; remain in some secret place: and enjoy thy God. For thou hast Him: whom all the world cannot take from thee. I am He, to whom thou oughtest wholly to give up thyself; so that thou mayest now live no longer in thyself; but in Me free from all anxiety.

CHAPTER XIII

THAT THE DEVOUT SOUL OUGHT WITH THE WHOLE HEART TO SEEK UNION WITH CHRIST IN THE SACRAMENT

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O THAT it were granted me Lord, to find Thee alone and open unto Thee my whole heart; and enjoy Thee as my soul desires: and that henceforth none may despise me,¹ nor any creature attract nor regard me; but that Thou alone mayest speak unto me and I to Thee: as the beloved is wont to speak to his beloved, and friend to feast with friend.²

¹ Song of Songs viii. 1.

² Ex. xxxiii. 11.

This I pray this I long for; that I may be wholly united unto Thee, and withdraw my heart from all created things: and by means of sacred Communion and frequent celebration may learn more and more to taste things heavenly and eternal. Ah Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to Thee and absorbed by Thee: and altogether forgetful of myself. Thou in me and I in Thee: so also grant that we may both continue together in one.¹

Verily Thou art my Beloved the Choicest among thousands:² in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life. Verily Thou art my Peacemaker; in whom is highest peace and true rest: out of whom is labour and sorrow and infinite misery. Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself;³ and Thy counsel is not with the wicked: but Thy speech is with the humble and simple.

O how sweet Lord, is Thy Spirit; who to shew forth Thy loveliness toward Thy children,⁴ dost deign to refresh them with the Bread of sweetness which cometh down from Heaven.⁵

¹ John xv. 4: xvii. 11, 21-23.

² Song of Songs v. 10.

³ Is. xlvi. 15.

⁴ Wisd. xii. 1, *O quam bonus et suavis est, Domine, spiritus tuus: xvi. 21, substantia enim tua dulcedinem tuam, quam in filios habes, ostendebat.*

⁵ From St. Thomas Aquinas, in *Off. Sacr. uest. ad magnificat.* H. notes that the same quotation is employed by a Kempis in his *Three Tabernacles*, vi. 3.

Surely there is no other nation so great that hath gods so nigh unto them :¹ as Thou our God art present to all Thy faithful ones ; unto whom for their daily comfort and for the raising up of their hearts to heaven : Thou givest Thyself to be eaten and enjoyed. For what other nation is there of such high renown as the Christian people ;² or what creature under Heaven is there so beloved as the devout soul ; into which God enters to feed it with His glorious Flesh ?

O unspeakable grace ; O admirable condescension : O boundless love specially bestowed on man.

But what return shall I make to the Lord for this grace ; for charity so unparalleled ? There is nothing else that I can present more acceptable : than to offer my heart wholly to God and unite it most inwardly unto Him.

Then shall all my inward parts rejoice : when my soul shall be perfectly united unto God. Then will He say unto me. If thou wilt be with Me, I will be with thee. And I will answer Him. Vouchsafe Lord to remain with me : gladly will I be with Thee. This is my whole desire : that my heart be united unto Thee.

¹ Deut. iv. 7.

² Deut. iv. 8. Here also there is a reference to St. Thomas Aquinas, *Off. Sacr. Lect. 4.*

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE FERVENT DESIRE OF SOME DEVOUT PERSONS FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O HOW great is the abundance of Thy sweet-
ness O Lord : which thou hast laid up for
them that fear Thee.¹

When I call to mind some devout persons
who approach to Thy Sacrament O Lord with
the greatest devotion and affection : I am often-
times confounded within myself and blush, that
I come with such lukewarmness yea coldness to
Thy Altar and the Table of sacred Communion ;
that I remain so dry, and heartless : that I am
not wholly kindled in Thy presence O my God,
nor so strongly drawn and affected as many
devout persons have been ; who out of vehement
longing for Communion and lively emotion of
heart could not restrain themselves from tears :
but with the mouth of heart and body alike they
from their inmost soul panted after Thee O God
the Fountain of Life ; not being otherwise able
to allay or satisfy their hunger : but only by
receiving Thy Body with all delight and spiritual
eagerness.

¹ Psal. xxxi. 19 (xxx. 20).

O for their true and glowing faith : that strong proof of Thy sacred Presence. For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread :¹ whose heart within them so vehemently burns because Jesus is walking with them. Far from me too often are such affection and devotion : such strong love and ardour.

Be thou favourable unto me O Jesu good sweet and benign : and grant to me Thy poor bedesman sometimes at least in Holy Communion to feel if it be but a touch of Thy hearty affectionate love ; that my faith may grow stronger, my hope in Thy goodness fuller : and that charity once perfectly kindled after tasting this heavenly manna may never decay.

Thy mercy however is well able to grant me even the grace which I long for : and to visit me most benignly with the spirit of fervour when the day of Thy good pleasure has come. For although I burn not with desire vehement as Thy special votaries ; yet by Thy grace I have a desire for this great burning desire : praying and longing that I may be a fellow of all such Thy ardent lovers, and be numbered in their holy company.

¹ Luke xxiv. 30-35.

CHAPTER XV

THAT THE GRACE OF DEVOTION IS OBTAINED
BY HUMILITY AND DENIAL OF OURSELVES

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

THOU oughtest earnestly to seek the grace of devotion, fervently to ask it patiently and confidently to wait for it; gratefully to receive it, humbly to keep it, diligently to work with it: and to commit the term and manner of this heavenly visitation to God until it shall come. Thou oughtest especially to humble thyself when thou feelest little or no devotion within: but yet not be too much dejected, nor grieve beyond measure. God often gives in one short moment: what He for a long time denied. He gives sometimes in the end: what in the beginning of prayer He delayed to give.

If grace were always quickly given, and came at a wish: weak man could not well bear it. Therefore the grace of devotion should be waited for: with good hope and humble patience. Nevertheless impute it to thyself and to thine own sins: when it is not given thee or is secretly taken away. It is sometimes but a small matter that hinders and hides grace; if anything can be called small and not rather great: which shuts out so great a good. And if thou remove this

be it small or great and perfectly overcome it: thou wilt have thy desire. For as soon as thou givest thyself to God from thy whole heart, and seekest neither this nor that according to thine own pleasure or will, but settlest thyself wholly in Him: thou shalt find thyself united and at peace; for nothing will be so sweet and delightful: as the good pleasure of the divine will.

Whosoever therefore with a single heart lifts up his intention to God; and empties himself of all inordinate liking or disliking of any created thing: shall be the most fit to receive grace and meet for the gift of devotion. For the Lord bestows His blessing there: where He finds the vessels empty. And the more perfectly one abandons things below, and the more he by contempt of himself dies to himself; the more speedily grace comes, the more plentifully it enters in: and the higher it lifts up the free heart.

Then shall he see and abound, and wonder and his heart shall be enlarged¹ within him; because the hand of the Lord is with him: and he hath put himself wholly into His hand for ever and ever. Behold thus shall the man be blessed,² who seeks God with his whole heart:³ and receives not his soul in vain.⁴ This man when he receives the Holy Eucharist, obtains

¹ Is. lx. 5.

³ Psal. cxviii. (cxix.) 2.

² Psal. cxxvii. (cxxviii.) 4.

⁴ Psal. xxiv. (xxiii.) 4 (Vulg.).

the great grace of divine union ; because he regards not his own devotion and comfort : but the honour and glory of God above all devotion and comfort.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT WE OUGHT TO LAY OPEN OUR NECESSITIES TO CHRIST AND TO CRAVE HIS GRACE

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

O MOST sweet and loving Lord whom I now desire to receive with devotion : Thou knowest mine infirmity and the necessity which I endure ; in what evils and vices I lie : how often I am weighed down tempted disturbed and defiled. Unto Thee I come for remedy : I entreat of Thee consolation and support.

I speak to Thee who knowest all things, to whom all my inward thoughts are open : and who alone canst perfectly comfort and help me. Thou knowest of what good things I stand in most need : and how poor I am in virtues. Behold I stand before Thee poor and naked : calling for grace and imploring mercy. Refresh Thy hungry beggarman ; warm my coldness with the fire of Thy love : enlighten my blindness with the brightness of Thy presence. Turn Thou for me all earthly things into bitterness ; all things grievous and contrary into patience : all

low and created things into contempt and forgetfulness. Lift up my heart to Thee in heaven : and send me not away to wander over the earth.¹ Be Thou alone sweet unto me from henceforth for evermore ; for Thou alone art my meat and drink, my love and my joy : my sweetness and all my good.

O that with Thy Presence Thou wouldest wholly kindle burn and transform me into Thyself ; that I might be made one spirit with Thee² by the grace of inward union : and the melting of ardent love. Suffer me not to go away from Thee hungry and dry ; but deal mercifully with me : as oftentimes Thou hast dealt wonderfully with Thy saints. What marvel is it if I should wholly catch fire of Thee, and in myself die down ; since Thou art Fire always burning and never dying down, Love purifying the heart, and enlightening the understanding.

CHAPTER XVII

OF FERVENT LOVE AND VEHEMENT DESIRE TO RECEIVE CHRIST

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE

WITH deep devotion and ardent love, with entire affection and fervour of heart I desire to receive Thee Lord : as many Saints

¹ Gen. iv. 12, 14.

² 1 Cor. vi. 17.

and devout persons have desired Thee in Communion; who in holiness of life were to Thee most pleasing: and in devotion also were most fervent. O my God eternal Love my whole Good Happiness unending; I long to receive Thee with the most earnest desire and the worthiest reverence: that any of the Saints ever had or could feel.

And although I be unworthy to enjoy all those feelings of devotion; nevertheless I offer unto Thee the whole affection of my heart: as if I alone harboured all those most grateful most ardent desires. Yea and all that a dutiful mind can conceive and desire: I do with the deepest reverence and heartiest affection present and offer unto Thee. There is nothing that I would keep to myself: but freely and most cheerfully would sacrifice unto Thee myself and all that is mine.

O Lord my God my Creator and my Redeemer I do desire to receive Thee this day with such affection reverence praise and honour with such gratitude worthiness and love, with such faith hope and purity; as Thy most holy Mother the glorious Virgin Mary received and desired Thee when to the Angel who declared unto her glad tidings of the mystery of the Incarnation she humbly and devoutly answered: Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it unto me according to Thy word.¹

¹ Luke i. 38.

And as Thy blessed forerunner most excellent among the Saints John Baptist rejoicing in Thy presence leaped for joy of the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet shut up in his mother's womb :¹ and afterwards seeing Jesus walking among men humbled himself very greatly and said with devout affection, The friend of the bridegroom that standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice ;² in like manner do I also wish to be kindled with great and holy desires : and to offer myself up to Thee from my whole heart.

Wherefore also for myself and for all such as are commended to me in prayer ; I offer and present unto Thee the triumphant joys, the ardent affections, the mental transports, and supernatural illuminations and celestial visions of all devout hearts with all virtues and praises celebrated and to be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and in earth, that by all Thou mayest worthily be praised : and glorified for evermore.

Receive O Lord my God my vows and desires of infinite praise and blessing that hath no bounds : which according to the measure of Thine ineffable greatness are justly due unto Thee. These do I pay Thee and long to pay Thee every day and every moment : and with all entreaty and affection I do invite and beseech all heavenly spirits

¹ Luke i. 44.

² John iii. 29.

and all Thy faithful, to render with me thanks and praises unto Thee.

Let all people nations and languages¹ praise Thee: and magnify Thy holy and most musical Name with highest exultation and ardent devotion. And may all who reverently and devoutly celebrate Thy most high Sacrament and receive it with full faith; be accounted worthy to find grace and mercy at Thy hands: and pray with humble supplication for me a sinner. And when they shall have attained to their longed-for devotion and joyful union, and shall have departed from Thy holy heavenly Table well comforted and marvellously refreshed: may they deign to remember poor me.

CHAPTER XVIII

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE A CURIOUS
SEARCHER INTO THE SACRAMENT BUT
A HUMBLE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST SUB-
MITTING HIS SENSE TO DIVINE FAITH

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED

BEWARE of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound Sacrament: if thou wilt not be plunged into the depths of doubt. He that pries into majesty: shall be overpowered by

¹ Dan. iii. 4: vii. 14.

glory.¹ God can work more: than man can understand.

A dutiful and humble enquiry after Truth is allowable: so it be always ready to be taught, and study to walk by the sound opinions of the Fathers. Blessed is the simplicity, which leaves the difficult ways of dispute: and goes forward in the plain and solid path of God's commandments. Many have lost devotion: whilst they sought to search into things too high.

Faith is required of thee and a sincere life: not height of understanding nor depth of mysteries of God. If thou dost not understand nor take in the things that are beneath thee, how shalt thou comprehend those which are above thee? Submit thyself unto God and humble thy sense to faith: and the light of knowledge shall be given thee as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

Some are grievously tempted about faith and the Sacrament: but this is not to be imputed to them but rather to the enemy. Be not thou anxious do not dispute with thine own thoughts: nor answer to doubts suggested by the devil; but trust the words of God trust His Saints and Prophets: and the wicked enemy will flee from thee. Oftentimes it is very profitable to the servant of God: to endure such things. For the devil tempts not unbelievers and sinners

¹ Prov. xxv. 27 (Vulgate).

whom he has already fast: but faithful and devout persons he in various ways tempts and disquiets.

Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith; and draw near to the Holy Sacrament with suppliant reverence: and whatsoever thou art not able to understand commit securely to Almighty God. God deceives thee not: he is deceived that trusts too much to himself. God walks with the simple reveals Himself to the humble; gives understanding to the little ones, opens the sense to pure minds: and hides grace from the inquisitive and proud.

Human reason is feeble and may be deceived: but true faith cannot be deceived. All reason and natural enquiry ought to follow faith: not go before it nor break in upon it. For faith and love do here specially take the lead: and work in hidden ways in this most holy most supremely excellent Sacrament. God who is eternal and incomprehensible and of infinite power; doeth things great and unsearchable in heaven and in earth: and there is no tracing out of His marvellous works. If the works of God were such that they might be easily comprehended by human reason: they could not be called marvellous or unspeakable.

There is no *expliciunt* after this book in the Autograph.

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HERE BEGINS
THE BOOK OF INTER-
NAL CONSOLATION

[FOURTH BOOK]

CHAPTER I

OF CHRIST'S SPEAKING INWARDLY TO THE
FAITHFUL SOUL

*I WILL hearken what the Lord God will speak
in me.¹*

Blessed is the soul which hears the Lord speaking within her: and receives from His mouth the word of consolation. Blessed are the ears that welcome the runlets of the Divine whisper:² and heed not the whisperings of this world. Blessed indeed are those ears that listen not to the voice which babbles without: but to the Truth which teaches within. Blessed are the eyes: which are shut to the outward, but open to the inward. Blessed are they that press into things within: and study to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises, for the receipt of Heavenly secrets. Blessed are they who give themselves eagerly up to God: and shake themselves free from all worldly hindrance.

¹ Psal. lxxxv. 8 (lxxxiv. 9).

² Job iv. 12 (Vulgate).

Consider this O my soul ; and shut the door of thy sensual desires : that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God shall speak in thee.

Thus saith thy Beloved. I am thy Salvation : thy Peace and thy Life. Keep thyself with Me : and thou shalt find peace. Let the transitory pass : seek the eternal. What are all temporal things ; but a snare ? and what can all creatures avail thee ; if thou be forsaken by the Creator ? Bid farewell therefore to all things, make thyself pleasing and faithful to thy Creator : that thou mayest lay hold of true blessedness.

CHAPTER II

THAT THE TRUTH SPEAKETH INWARDLY WITHOUT NOISE OF WORDS

*SPEAK Lord : for Thy servant heareth.*¹

I am Thy servant : grant me understanding that I may know Thy testimonies.² Incline my heart to the words of Thy mouth :³ let Thy speech distil as the dew.⁴

The children of Israel in times past said unto Moses. Speak thou unto us and we will hear ; let not the Lord speak unto us : lest we die.⁵ Not so Lord not so I beseech Thee : but rather

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 10.

² Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 125.

³ Psal. lxxviii. (lxxvii.) 1.

⁴ Deut. xxxii. 2.

⁵ Ex. xx. 19.

with the prophet Samuel I humbly and earnestly entreat. Speak Lord for Thy servant heareth. Let not Moses speak unto me nor any of the prophets: but rather do Thou speak Lord God Inspirer and Enlightener of all prophets; for Thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me: but they without Thee can profit nothing.

They indeed may sound forth words: but they cannot give the Spirit. Beautifully do they speak: but if Thou be silent they kindle not the heart. They teach the letter: but Thou openest the sense.¹ They bring forth mysteries: but Thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things. They declare Thy commandments: but Thou helpest to fulfil them. They shew the way: but Thou givest strength to walk in it.

What they do is all without: but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart. They water outwardly: but Thou givest fruitfulness. They cry aloud in words: but Thou impartest understanding to the hearing.

Let not Moses therefore speak unto me but Thou O Lord my God the Eternal Truth: lest I die and prove unfaithful, if I be only warned outwardly and not kindled inwardly; lest the word turn to my condemnation if it be heard and not done, known and not loved: believed and not observed.

¹ Luke xxiv. 45 (Vulgate).

Speak therefore Lord for Thy servant heareth : for Thou hast the words of eternal life.¹ Speak Thou unto me to the partial comfort of my soul and to the perfect amendment of my life: and to Thy praise and glory and everlasting honour.

CHAPTER III

THAT THE WORDS OF GOD ARE TO BE HEARD WITH HUMILITY AND THAT MANY WEIGH THEM NOT

SON hear My words words most sweet: surpassing all knowledge of philosophers and wise men of this world. My words are Spirit and Life:² not to be weighed by the understanding of man. They are not to be abused for complacent vanity; but heard in silence: and received with all humility and great affection.

And I said. Blessed is the man whom Thou shalt instruct O Lord: and shalt teach out of Thy Law. That Thou mayest give him rest from evil days:³ and that he be not desolate upon earth.

I taught the Prophets from the beginning saith the Lord and cease not even to this day to speak to all: but many are deaf to My voice and hard. Most men listen to the world more readily than to God; they follow more readily the lust of

¹ John vi. 68.

² John vi. 63.

³ Psal. xciv. (xciii.) 12, 13.

their flesh : than the good pleasure of God. The world promises things temporal and little and is served with great avidity ; I promise things high and eternal : and the hearts of men remain untouched. Who serves and obeys Me in all things so punctually ; as the world and its lords are served ? Blush Sidon saith the sea.¹ And if thou ask the cause : hear wherefore.

For a slender benefice men will run for miles : for eternal life few will once lift a foot from the ground. The poorest price is deemed worth effort, for a single coin at times there is shameful contention ; for a vain matter and a light promise men shrink not from toil by day and night : but alas for an unchangeable good for a priceless reward, for the highest honour and endless glory men grudge even the least fatigue.

Blush therefore thou slothful and complaining servant ; that they are found readier for destruction : than thou for life. They rejoice more in vanity : than thou in truth.

Sometimes indeed they are balked of their hope ; but My promise fails no man : nor sends away empty him that trusts in Me. What I have promised I will give ; what I have said I will fulfil : if only a man remain faithful in My love even to the end. I am the Rewarder of all good men : and the strong Approver of all devout men.

¹ Is. xxiii. 4.

Write thou My words in Thy heart and meditate diligently on them: for in time of temptation they will be very needful. What thou understandest not when thou readest: thou shalt know in the day of visitation. In two ways I visit Mine elect: namely with temptation and with consolation. And daily I read two lessons to them; one in reproofing their vices: another in exhorting them to the increase of virtues.

He that hath My words and despiseth them: hath One that shall judge him in the last day.¹

A PRAYER TO IMPOLE THE GRACE OF
DEVOTION.

O Lord my God Thou art all my good. And who am I that I should dare to speak to Thee? I am Thy poorest little servant and a vile worm: far poorer and more contemptible than I can or dare express. Yet do Thou remember me Lord: because I am nothing, have nothing, and can do nothing. Thou alone art Good Just and Holy; Thou canst do all things,² Thou givest all fillest all:³ only the sinner Thou leavest empty. Remember Thy mercies,⁴ and fill my heart with Thy grace: Thou who wilt not that Thy handiwork should be empty.⁵

¹ John xii. 48.

² Job xliv. 2.

³ Jer. xxiii. 24. It was a favourite text with St. Augustine. See *Confessions* i. 2, *ad finem*.

⁴ Psal. xxv. (xxiv.) 6.

⁵ Wisdom xiv. 5.

How can I bear with myself in this wretched life; unless Thy mercy and grace support me? Turn not Thy face away from me,¹ delay not Thy visitation; withdraw not Thy consolation: lest my soul become unto Thee as a waterless land.¹ Teach me Lord to do Thy will:¹ teach me to live worthily and humbly in Thy sight; for Thou art my Wisdom who knowest me as I am: and didst know me before the world was made and before I was born in the world.

CHAPTER IV

THAT WE OUGHT TO LIVE IN TRUTH AND
HUMILITY BEFORE GOD

I

SON. Walk before Me in truth:² and seek Me ever in simplicity of thy heart. He that walks before Me in truth; shall be safe from the approach of harm: and the truth shall set him free³ from seducers and from the slanders of unjust men. If the Truth have made thee free thou shalt be free indeed:⁴ and shalt not heed vain words of men.

Lord it is true. As Thou sayest, so I beseech Thee let it be with me. Let Thy Truth teach me; guard me: and keep me unto salvation at

¹ Psal. cxliii. (cxlii.) 6-10.

² 1 Kings ii. 4: Wisdom i. 1.

³ John viii. 32.

⁴ John viii. 36.

the last. Let it release me from all evil affection and inordinate love: and I shall walk with Thee in great freedom of heart.

II

I will teach thee saith the Truth what is right: and pleasing in My sight. Think on thy sins with great displeasure and grief: and never hold thyself in honour because of good works. In truth thou art a sinner: assailed and encompassed by many passions. Of thyself thou art ever drifting towards nothingness; quickly falling, quickly conquered: quickly confounded, quickly dissolved. Thou hast nought to boast of; but much reason to scorn thyself: for thou art far weaker than thou canst understand. Therefore let nothing seem great unto thee of all that thou doest. Let nothing seem great nothing precious and wonderful, nothing worthy of esteem; nothing high nothing truly praiseworthy and desirable: but that which is eternal. Let the eternal Truth delight thee above all things: and let thy utter unworthiness be a constant grief unto thee. Fear nothing blame nothing flee nothing so anxiously, as thy vices and sins: which ought to discomfort thee more than any losses of earthly things.

Some walk not sincerely in My sight; but led by curiosity and pride wish to know My secrets

and understand the high things of God : neglecting themselves and their salvation. These often fall into great temptations and sins through their pride and curiosity when I set myself against them. Fear the judgments of God : dread the wrath of the Almighty. Do not pry into the works of the Most High : but search diligently thine own iniquities what great faults thou hast committed : and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some carry their devotion only in books ; some in images : some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me in their mouths : but little in their hearts.¹ Others there are who being enlightened in mind and purged in affection do always yearn for things eternal ; grieve to hear of the things of earth, serve the needs of nature with sorrow : and these hear what the Spirit of Truth speaketh in them ; for He teacheth them to despise earth, and love heaven : to neglect the world, and long for heaven all day and night.

CHAPTER V

OF THE WONDERFUL EFFECT OF DIVINE LOVE

I

I BLESS Thee Heavenly Father Father of my Lord Jesus Christ :² that Thou hast deigned to remember poor me. O Father of mercies and

¹ Is. xxix. 13 : Matt. xv. 8 : Mark vii. 6.

² 2 Cor. i. 3.

God of all comfort thanks be unto Thee : who sometimes with Thy comfort refreshest me unworthy as I am of all comfort. I bless and glorify Thee alway with Thy only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost the Comforter : for ever and ever.

Ah Lord God my Holy Lover, when Thou comest into my heart : all that is within me shall rejoice. Thou art my Glory : and the exultation of my heart. Thou art my Hope and Refuge : in the day of my trouble.¹

But because I am still weak in love and imperfect in virtue : I need to be strengthened and comforted by Thee. Therefore visit me often and instruct me with holy discipline ; set me free from evil passions : and heal my heart of all inordinate affections ; that being cured and well cleansed within I may be made ready to love, brave to suffer, steady to persevere.

II

Love is a great thing, yea a great good ; alone it makes every burden light : and bears evenly all that is uneven. For it carries a burden which is no burden : and makes all bitterness sweet and palatable.

The noble love of Jesus impels to great deeds : and arouses a constant desire for greater perfection.

¹ Psal. lix. 16 (lviii. 17).

Love longs to soar: and will not be held down by things that are low. Love longs to be free, and estranged from all worldly affection: that its inner eye may not be dimmed; that it may not be caught by any temporal prosperity: or by any adversity cast down. Nothing is sweeter than Love; nothing braver, nothing higher nothing wider: nothing sweeter nothing fuller nor better in Heaven and in earth; because Love is born of God: and can only rest in God above all created things.

The lover flies runs and rejoices: he is free and cannot be held. He gives all for all: and has all in all; because he rests in One Highest above all things: from whom all good flows and proceeds. He regards not the gifts: but turns himself above all goods to the Giver. Love often knows no measure: but is fervent beyond all measure. Love feels no burden: counts no pains, exerts itself beyond its strength; talks not of impossibility: for it thinks all things possible and all permitted. It is therefore strong enough for all things; and it fulfils many things and warrants them to take effect: where he who loves not faints and lies down.

Love is watchful and sleeping slumbers not; though weary it is not tired, though hampered is not hampered, though alarmed is not affrighted: but as a lively flame and burning torch it forces

its way upwards and serenely passes through. If any man love: he knows what is the cry of this voice. A loud cry¹ in the ears of God: is the glowing affection of a soul, which saith. My God my Love: Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.

Enlarge me in love; that with the inner mouth of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love: and to be melted and bathed in love. Let me be held fast by Love: climbing above myself in ardent zeal and wonder. Let me sing the song of love, let me follow Thee my Beloved to the heights: let my soul spend itself in Thy praise exulting for love. Let me love Thee more than myself, and myself only for Thee, and in Thee all that love Thee truly: as the law of Love commandeth shining forth from Thee.

Love is swift sincere dutiful pleasant and delightful; brave patient faithful prudent long-suffering manly: and never seeking itself. For where one seeks himself: there he falls from Love. Love is wary humble and upright; not soft nor fickle nor bent on vanities: sober chaste steady quiet and guarded in all its senses. Love is subject and obedient to prelates: to itself mean and despised, to God devout and thankful; trusting

¹ St. Bernard in *Ps. xc. Sermo xvi.*: *siquidem in Dei auribus desiderium uehemens clamor magnus: e regione autem remissa intentio uox submissa.* H.

and hoping always in Him even when God is not sweet unto it : for without sorrow there is no living in love.

He that is not ready to suffer all and to resign himself to the will of the Beloved : is not worthy to be called a lover. A lover must welcome all hardship and bitterness for the sake of the Beloved : and not be turned away from Him by any rebuffs that may befall.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE PROOF OF A TRUE LOVER

I

SON thou art not yet a brave and discreet lover.

Why Lord ?

Because for a light rebuff thou turnest back from thy purposes : and too eagerly seekest consolation. A brave lover stands firm in temptations : nor listens to the crafty persuasions of the Enemy. As I please him in fair weather : so I displease not in foul. A discreet lover regards not so much the gift of his friend : as the love of the Giver. He counts the affection rather than the price : and sets the Beloved above all his gifts. A noble lover rests not in the gift : but in Me above every gift.

All is not lost, because at times thy heart is

not stirred towards Me or My saints as thou wouldest. That good and sweet affection which thou sometimes feelest: is the effect of grace present, and a foretaste of thy heavenly home. But thou must not lean thereon too much: for it comes and goes. But to strive against the entrance of evil motions of the mind, and to scorn the promptings of the devil: is a sign of virtue and of great desert. Let no fancies from without therefore trouble thee: whatever the object that suggests them. Hold staunchly to thy purpose: and thy upright intention towards God.

Neither is it an illusion that at times thou art suddenly rapt into ecstasy: and presently returnest unto the accustomed follies of thy heart. For these thou dost rather endure than pursue; and so long as thou mislike them and resist: it is merit and not perdition.

Know that the ancient Enemy must try all means to thwart thy desire for good, and to empty thee from all devout exercises; to wit from the veneration of the saints from the devout commemoration of My Passion, from the salutary remembrance of sins, from the guard of thine own heart: and from the firm purpose of advancing in virtue. Many evil thoughts does he thrust upon thee, that he may cause in thee weariness and dread: to divert thee from prayer and holy reading. Humble confession he cannot

abide: and if he could he would cause thee to cease from Communion.

Trust him not nor heed him: although he should often set snares of deceit for thee. Rebuke him with it: when he suggests evil and unclean thoughts. Say unto him. Away unclean Spirit, blush thou caitiff; most unclean art thou: thou whisperest such things into mine ears. Begone thou wicked Seducer; thou shalt have no part in me: but Jesus shall be with me as a strong Warrior,¹ and thou shalt stand confounded. Rather would I die and bear any torment: than consent unto thee. Hold thy peace and be silent; I will hear thee no further: though thou shouldest trouble me still more. The Lord is my Light and my Salvation: whom shall I fear?² If a host should band together against me: my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my Helper: and my Redeemer.³

II

Fight like a good soldier;⁴ and if at times thou fall through weakness, take again greater strength than before trusting in larger grace from Me: and take great heed of foolish conceit and of pride. Through this many are led into error: and fall at times into blindness almost past cure.

¹ Jer. xx. 11.

² Psal. xxvii. (xxvi.) 1, 3.

³ Psal. xix. 14 (xviii. 15).

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 12: 2 Tim. ii. 3.

Let the fall of the proud¹ thus foolishly presuming on themselves : teach thee caution and constant humility.

CHAPTER VII

OF HIDING GRACE UNDER THE GUARD OF HUMILITY

SON. It is better for thee and safer to hide the grace of devotion : not to uplift thyself, nor to speak much thereof nor to prize it much ; but rather to despise thyself : and to fear it as given to one unworthy. We should not cling to this affection : for it may quickly be changed to the contrary. Think when thou art in grace : how miserable and needy thou art without grace. Nor does thy progress in spiritual life, depend upon thy having the grace of comfort : but rather on thy humbly and resignedly and patiently enduring its withdrawal ; so that thou dost not flag in prayer at such a time : nor suffer the rest of thy usual round of duties to fall wholly away ; but rather cheerfully performest thy part to the best of thy power and understanding : and dost not wholly neglect thyself because of the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest.

For there are many, who when it goes not well with them : straightway become impatient or slack.

¹ Prov. xvi. 18.

For the way of man is not always in his own power;¹ but God gives and comforts when He will and as He will and whom He will: as it shall please Him and no more.

Some thoughtless ones have ruined themselves through the grace of devotion; because they wanted to do more than they could, not weighing the measure of their own littleness: but following the desire of their heart rather than the judgment of their reason. And because they ventured on greater things than God allowed: they quickly lost His grace. They who made themselves a nest in Heaven;² were abandoned to need and misery: that in abasement and poverty they might learn not to fly with their own wings: but to trust under My feathers.³

They that are yet novices and unskilled in the way of the Lord: unless they rule themselves by the counsel of the discreet, may easily be deceived and wrecked. And if they will rather follow their own fancy than trust to the experience of others; their end will be dangerous: if yet they will not be drawn away from their own conceit. Seldom do these who are wise in their own eyes:⁴ submit humbly to be ruled by others. Better is a little wisdom with humility and a slender wit: than great treasures of learning

¹ Jer. x. 23.

³ Psal. xci. (xc.) 4.

² Obadiah 4.

⁴ Rom. xi. 25.

with vain self-satisfaction. Better for thee to have little: than abound, in what may make thee proud.

He acts not discreetly, who gives himself over to joy: forgetting his former helplessness and the chastened fear of the Lord, which fears to lose the grace that has been given. Nor again is he virtuously minded; who in time of adversity or any heaviness yields too much to despair: and thinks and feels of Me less trustfully than he ought. He who in time of peace has been over secure: in time of war shall be often found¹ too dejected and fearful. If thou couldest always remain humbly and modestly within thyself; and further couldest wisely curb and rule thy spirit: thou wouldest not fall so quickly into danger and offence.

It is good advice, that when the spirit of fervour is kindled: thou shouldest consider how it will be when that light departs. And when this happens, remember that the light may return again: which as a warning to thyself, and for Mine own glory I have withdrawn for a time. Such a trial is often more profitable: than if thou shouldest always have things prosper according to thy will. For a man's worthiness is not greater if he has more visions and comforts: or more skill in the Scriptures: or if he be placed in higher degree; but if he be grounded in true humility

and full of divine charity: if God's honour be always his pure and single aim; if he think nothing of himself, and unfeignedly despise himself: and rejoice more to be despised and abased than honoured by others also.

CHAPTER VIII

OF LOW THOUGHTS OF OURSELVES IN THE SIGHT OF GOD

I WILL speak unto my Lord: though I am but dust and ashes.¹ If I think myself to be more; behold Thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true witness: and I cannot gainsay it. But if I abase myself, and reduce myself to nothing: and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to the dust that I am; Thy grace will be propitious to me and Thy light near unto my heart: and every shred of conceit shall be swallowed up in the valley of my nothingness and perish for ever. There Thou shewest me unto myself, what I am what I have been and whither I am come: for I am nothing and I knew it not.² If I be left to myself: behold I am nothing and all infirmity. But if Thou suddenly look upon me; I am forthwith made strong: and filled with new joy. And a great marvel it

¹ Gen. xviii. 27.

² Psal. lxxii. 22 (Vulgate).

is, that I am so suddenly lifted up and so graciously embraced by Thee: who of mine own weight am always sinking down.

Thy love is the cause hereof freely preventing me, and supporting me in so many necessities; guarding me also from pressing dangers; and snatching me that I may tell the truth from evils out of number. For by loving myself amiss I lost myself;¹ and by seeking Thee alone and purely loving Thee I have found both myself and Thee: and for love have more utterly reduced myself to nought. Because Thou O Thou Sweetest dealest with me above all desert: and above all I dare hope or ask.

Blessed be Thou my God; for although I be unworthy of any benefits: yet Thy nobleness and infinite kindness never ceases to do good even to the ungrateful and to those who are turned away far from Thee. Turn Thou us unto Thee, that we may be thankful humble and devout: for Thou art our salvation, our courage and our strength.

¹ John xii. 25: Matt. x. 39; xvi. 25: Mark viii. 35: Luke ix. 24; xvii. 33.

CHAPTER IX

THAT ALL THINGS ARE TO BE REFERRED
UNTO GOD AS THEIR FINAL END

SON. I ought to be thy supreme and final end: if thou desire to be truly blessed. By this intention thy affection will be purified: which is too often perversely warped to itself and created things. For if thou seekest thyself in any thing: immediately thou art faint and dry within. Refer therefore all things to Me as their Author: for I am He who gave them all. Think of them one by one as flowing from the Highest Good: and therefore unto Me as their source must all be traced.

From Me the small and the great, the poor and the rich, as from a living fountain to draw the water of life;¹ and they that willingly and freely serve Me: shall receive grace for grace.² But he who glories without Me, or delights in any private good; shall not be stablished in true joy, nor enlarged in his heart: but shall many ways be hindered and straitened. Thou shouldest therefore ascribe nothing of good to thyself: nor virtue to any man; but give all unto God: without whom man hath nothing. I gave all; I must have all given back again: and with great strictness do I require thanks.

¹ John iv. 14: vii. 38.

² John i. 16.

This is the truth: whereby vain-glory is put to flight. And if heavenly grace enter in and true charity; there will be no envy, nor narrowness of heart: neither will private affection hold thee. For divine charity overcomes all things:¹ and enlarges all the powers of the soul. If thou art wise thou wilt rejoice in Me alone, wilt hope in Me alone; for none is good save God alone:¹ who is to be praised above all things and in all to be blessed.

CHAPTER X

THAT IT IS SWEET TO DESPISE THE WORLD AND SERVE GOD

I

NOW I will speak again Lord and not be silent; I will say in the ears of my God, my Lord and my King: who is on high. O how great is the abundance of Thy sweetness Lord: which Thou hast laid up in secret for them that fear Thee.² But what art Thou to those who love Thee; what to those who serve Thee with their whole heart? Truly unspeakable is the sweetness of Thy contemplation: which Thou bestowest on them that love Thee. In this especially Thou hast shewed me the sweetness of

¹ Matt. xix. 17: Luke xviii. 19. There may be here, as Gence thinks, a reminiscence of Virgil, *Ecl. x. 69, Omnia uincit Amor.*

² Psal. xxxi. 19 (xxx. 20).

Thy charity, that when I was not Thou madest me: when I went far astray from Thee, Thou broughtest me back again that I might serve Thee: and hast commanded me to love Thee.

O Fount of Love unceasing. What shall I say concerning Thee? How can I forget Thee; who hast deigned to remember me, even after I had wasted away and perished? Thou hast shewed mercy to Thy servant beyond all hope: and hast granted favour and friendship beyond all desert. What return shall I make to Thee for this grace? For it is not granted to all, to forsake all renounce the world: and assume the monastic life. Is it a great thing that I should serve Thee; whom all creation is bound to serve? It ought not to seem a great thing to me to serve Thee; but rather this appears great to me and wonderful: that Thou dost condescend to receive into Thy service one so poor and unworthy and to make him one with Thy beloved servants.

Behold all that I have and whereby I serve Thee: is Thine. And yet Thou servest me rather than I Thee.

Behold heaven and earth which Thou hast created for the service of man¹ wait upon Thee: and daily perform whatever Thou hast commanded. And this is little: Thou hast also appointed Angels in their orders to minister to man.² Yet is it

¹ Deut. iv. 19 (Vulgate).

² Heb. i. 14.

more adorable than all, that Thou Thyself hast deigned to serve man: and hast promised to give Thyself unto him.

What shall I give Thee for all these thousands of benefits? Would I could serve Thee all the days of my life. Would I were able for one single day to do Thee worthy service. Truly Thou art worthy of all service: all honour and eternal praise. Truly Thou art my Lord, and I Thy poor servant; who am bound to serve Thee with all my might: neither ought I ever to be weary of praising Thee. This is my wish this my desire: and whatsoever is wanting unto me, do Thou vouchsafe to supply.

II

It is great honour great glory to serve Thee: and despise all things for Thee. For they shall have great grace: who have willingly subjected themselves to Thy most holy thraldom. They who for Thy love have renounced all carnal delight: shall find the sweetest consolation of the Holy Ghost. They shall attain great freedom of mind; who for Thy Name's sake enter the narrow way:¹ and have cast aside all worldly care.

O pleasant and joyous bondage of God: by which a man is made truly free and holy. O

¹ Matt. vii. 14.

sacred state of religious dependence ; which makes man equal to Angels, pleasing to God, terrible to devils : and worthy to be commended of all the faithful. O welcome servitude and ever to be desired, in which the wage is the highest Good : and joy is attained which shall endure without end.

CHAPTER XI

THAT THE DESIRES OF OUR HEARTS ARE TO BE EXAMINED AND MODERATED

SON. It is needful for thee still to learn much more : which thou hast not yet well learned.

What is this Lord ?

That thou frame thy desires wholly according to My good pleasure ; and be not a lover of thyself : but an eager zealot of My will. Desires oft inflame thee and drive thee on with vehemence : but do thou consider whether thou be moved for My honour or thine own advantage. If I be the cause : thou wilt be well content, whatsoever I shall ordain. But if there lurk in thee any self-seeking : behold this it is that hinders thee and weighs thee down.

Beware therefore thou lean not too much upon preconceived desire without asking My counsel ; lest perhaps afterwards that repent or displease

thee: which at first attracted thee and which thou didst eagerly pursue as being the best. For not every impulse which seems good is immediately to be followed: nor again is every painful impulse to be at once avoided. It is sometimes expedient to use the curb even in good endeavours and desires; lest through preoccupation thou incur distraction of mind; lest by want of self-government thou beget scandal unto others: or again by the contradiction of others thou suddenly lose temper and fall. Sometimes however thou must use violence and resist manfully thy sensual appetite; nor care what the flesh would or would not; but rather strive, that even against its will it may be subdued to the Spirit.¹ And it must be chastised and forced to bear the yoke, until it be ready for every thing; and learn to be content with little and find delight in simple things: and not murmur against any discomfort.

CHAPTER XII

OF THE DISCIPLINE OF PATIENCE AND OF
STRIVING AGAINST CONCUPISCIENCE

O LORD God as I see patience is very necessary for me; for many things in this life do happen to thwart us. For whatever plans I

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

devise for my peace: my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

It is so Son. But My will is that thou seek not a peace which is free from temptations or feels no disturbance; but think that thou hast even then found peace: when thou art harassed by sundry tribulations, and tried by many crosses. If thou say that thou art not able to suffer much; how then wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory? Of two evils the less is always to be chosen. That thou mayest therefore escape eternal punishment in the future: strive to endure present evils calmly for God's sake.

Dost thou think that the men of this world suffer nothing or little? Thou wilt not find it so: though thou ask the most luxurious. But thou wilt say they have many delights and follow their own desires: and therefore they do not much weigh their afflictions. Be it so: grant that they have whatsoever they will. But how long dost thou think it will last? Behold the wealthy of this world shall consume away like smoke:¹ and there shall be no memory of their past joys. Yea while yet they are alive: they do not rest in them without bitterness and weariness and fear. For from the self-same thing from which they drink delight: oftentimes they receive the penalty of sorrow. Just it is, that having greedily

¹ Psal. lxxii. 12: xxxvi. 20 (Vulgate).

sought and followed after pleasures: they should enjoy them not without shame and bitterness.

O how brief, how false: how intemperate and base are they all. Yet so drunken and blind are men that they understand it not: but like dumb beasts for the poor enjoyment of this transitory life they run upon the death of the soul.

Thou therefore son go not after thy lusts: but refrain thyself from thy will.¹ Delight thyself in the Lord: and He shall grant thee the petitions of thine heart.² For if thou desire true delight and to be more plentifully comforted by Me; behold in the contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off all base delights shall be thy blessing: and abundant consolation shall be rendered to thee. And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace of creatures: the sweeter and more powerful consolations shalt thou find in Me.

But at first thou shalt not without some sadness nor without toil of conflict attain unto them. Old inbred habit will rebel: but by a better habit shall it be entirely overcome. The flesh will murmur: but with fervency of spirit thou shalt bridle it. The Old Serpent will goad and embitter thee; but by prayer he shall be put to flight: moreover by useful employment thou shalt bar his main approach.

¹ Ecclesiasticus xviii. 30.

² Psal. xxxvii. (xxxvi.) 4.

CHAPTER XIII

OF THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE IN HUMBLE SUBJECTION AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

SON. He that endeavours to withdraw himself from obedience: withdraws himself from grace. And he who seeks his own: loses what all the brethren have. He that doth not cheerfully and freely submit himself to his superior; it is a sign that his flesh is not yet perfectly obedient unto him: but oftentimes kicks and murmurs. Learn therefore quickly to submit to thy superior: if thou desire to keep thine own flesh under the yoke. For the outward enemy is sooner overcome: if the inward man be not laid waste. There is no more troublesome or deadly enemy to the soul: than thou art unto thyself, if thou be not in harmony with the Spirit. It is indispensable that thou take up a true contempt for thyself: if thou desire to prevail against flesh and blood.¹

Because as yet thou lovest thyself inordinately: therefore thou art afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others. And yet what great matter is it, if thou who art dust and nothing, subject thyself to a man for God's sake; when I the Almighty and the Most High who created all

¹ Eph. vi. 12.

things of nothing humbly subjected Myself to man for thy sake? I became of all men the humblest and lowest: that thou mightest beat down thy pride with My humility.

O dust learn to obey; learn to humble thyself thou earth and clay: and to bow thyself down under the feet of all men. Learn to break thine own will: and to yield thyself to all subjection. Be fiercely hot against thyself, and suffer no pride to live in thee; but shew thyself so humble and so very small: that all may be able to walk over thee and tread thee down as the mire of the streets.

Vain man what hast thou to complain of: what canst thou answer foul sinner to them that upbraid thee; thou who hast so often offended God, and so many times deserved hell? But Mine eye spared thee; because thy soul was precious in My sight: that Thou mightest know My love and ever be thankful for My benefits; and that thou mightest continually give thyself to true subjection and humility: and endure patiently the contempt which is thy due.

CHAPTER XIV

OF CONSIDERING THE SECRET JUDGMENTS
OF GOD THAT WE BE NOT LIFTED
UP FOR ANY GOOD

LORD Thou thunderest forth Thy judgments over me; Thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling: and my soul is sore afraid. I stand astonished and I consider: that the Heavens are not pure in Thy sight.¹ If in Angels Thou didst find wickedness² and didst not spare them; what shall become of me? Stars fell from Heaven;³ how then can I presume who am but dust? They whose works seemed laudable have fallen into the depths; and those who did eat the bread of Angels: I have seen delighting themselves with the husks of swine.⁴

There is therefore no sanctity if Thou O Lord withdraw Thine hand: no wisdom avails, if Thou cease to steer; no courage helps, if Thou cease to defend: no chastity is secure, if Thou do not protect it; no custody of our own avails: if Thy holy watchfulness be not over us. For left to ourselves we sink and perish: but if Thou visit us we are raised up and live. Truly we are unstable but through Thee we are strengthened: we grow cold, but by Thee we are enkindled.

¹ Job xv. 15. ² Job iv. 18. ³ Rev. vi. 13; viii. 10.

⁴ Psal. lxxviii. (lxxvii.) 25: Luke xv. 16.

O how humbly and meanly should I think of myself: how should I despise whatever good I seem to have. O how deeply should I abase myself beneath Thy unfathomable judgments Lord :¹ where I find myself to be nothing else, than Nothing and Nothing.

O unmeasurable weight; O shoreless sea: where I discover nothing of myself save only Nothing.

Where then is the hiding-place of glory; where the presumption of virtue? All vain-glory is swallowed up, in the deep of Thy judgments over me. What is all flesh in Thy sight? Shall the clay boast against Him that formeth it?² How can he be lifted up with vain words; whose heart is truly subject to God?

Not all the world can uplift him: whom the Truth hath subjected unto itself; neither shall he be moved though all tongues praise him: who hath settled his whole hope in God. For even they who speak, behold they all are nothing; for they will pass away with the sound of their words: but the Truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.³

¹ Psal. xxxvi. 6 (xxxv. 7).

² Is. xlvi. 9: Jer. xviii. 6: Rom. ix. 20.

³ Psal. cxvii. (cxvi.) 2.

CHAPTER XV

IN EVERY THING WHICH WE DESIRE HOW
WE OUGHT TO STAND AND WHAT WE
OUGHT TO SAY

SON. Say thou thus in every thing. Lord if this be pleasing unto Thee: so let it be. Lord if it be to Thy honour: in Thy Name let it be. Lord if Thou seest it expedient and approvest it to be good for me: then grant unto me that I may use it to Thine honour. But if Thou knowest it will hurt me and not tend to the health of my soul: take away from me any such desire.

For not every desire comes from the Holy Spirit: even though it seem unto a man right and good. It is difficult to judge truly, whether a good, or an evil spirit drive thee to desire this or that: or whether thou be moved by thine own spirit. Many have been deceived in the end: who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

Therefore whatever occurs to the mind as desirable, must always be desired and prayed for in the fear of God and with humility of heart: and chiefly thou must commit the whole matter to Me with resignation, and thou must say. Lord Thou knowest, what is best: let this or that be done and as Thou shalt please. Give what Thou wilt and how much Thou wilt: and

when Thou wilt. Deal with me as Thou knowest and as best pleases Thee: and is most for Thy honour. Set me where Thou wilt: and deal with me freely in all things as Thou wilt. I am in Thy hand: spin me forward or spin me back.¹ Behold I am Thy servant, ready for all; for I desire not to live unto myself but unto Thee: and O that I could do it worthily and perfectly.

A PRAYER THAT THE WILL OF GOD MAY
BE FULFILLED

O kind Jesus grant me Thy grace; that it may be with me and labour with me:² and persevere with me even to the end. Grant that I may always desire and will: that which is to Thee more acceptable and more dear. Let Thy will be mine: and let my will ever follow Thine and perfectly agree with it. Let my yea and nay be one with Thine; and let me not be able to will or will not any thing: but what Thou willest or willest not.

Grant that I may die to all things that are in

¹ There is possibly a reference here to Ecclesiastes i. 6, which in the Vulgate runs *Gyrat per meridiem, et flectitur ad aquilonem: lustrans uniuersa in circuitu pergit spiritus, et in circulos suos reuertitur.* Scotus Erigena (*de diu. Naturae* iii. 18), quoting the same passage from a ninth-century text, has *Gyrans gyrande uadit spiritus et in locum suum reuertitur.* I do not know, but it would be interesting to know, what text a Kempis read in this passage.

² Wisdom ix. 10.

the world: and for Thy sake love to be contemned and unknown in this generation. Grant to me above all things that can be desired to rest in Thee: and in Thee to set my heart at peace. Thou art true peace of heart Thou alone art rest: out of Thee all things are hard and restless. In this peace, towards the Same:¹ that is in Thee the one and Chief and Eternal Good I will sleep and rest. Amen.

CHAPTER XVI

THAT TRUE COMFORT IS TO BE SOUGHT IN GOD ALONE

WHATSOEVER I can desire or imagine for my comfort: I look for it not here, but hereafter. For if I might alone have all the comforts of the world and enjoy all its delights: it is certain that they could not long endure.

Wherefore O my soul thou canst not be fully comforted nor perfectly refreshed: except in God the Comforter of the poor and Sponsor of the humble. Wait a little while O my soul; wait for the divine promise: and thou shalt have abundance of all good things in heaven. If thou desire inordinately the things that are present: thou shalt lose those which are eternal and

¹ See note on *the Same*, Book ii. chap. 10 above.

heavenly. Use temporal things : desire eternal. Thou canst not be satisfied with any temporal good : because thou art not created to enjoy them. Although thou shouldest possess all created goods, yet couldest thou not be happy nor blessed ; but in God who created all things, stands thy whole blessedness and felicity : not such as is seen and praised by the foolish lovers of the world ; but such as good and faithful servants of Christ wait for, and of which the spiritual and pure in heart : whose conversation is in heaven¹ sometimes have a foretaste.

Vain and brief is all human solace. Blessed and true is the solace : which is received inwardly from the Truth. A devout man bears every where about with him his own Comforter Jesus : and saith unto Him. Be Thou with me Lord Jesu in every place and time. Let this be my consolation : gladly to forego all human comfort. And if Thy consolation be wanting : let Thy will and just trial of me be unto me the greatest comfort. For Thou wilt not always be angry : neither wilt Thou threaten for ever.²

¹ Phil. iii. 20.

² Psal. ciii. (cii.) 9.

CHAPTER XVII

THAT ALL OUR ANXIETIES ARE TO BE
PLACED ON GOD

SON. Suffer me to do with thee what I please: I know what is good for thee. Thou thinkest as man: thou judgest in many things as human inclination persuades thee.

Lord what Thou sayest is true. Greater is Thy anxiety for me: than all the care that I can take for myself. For he stands precariously: who casts not all his anxiety upon Thee. Lord if only my will may remain right and firm towards Thee: do with me whatsoever it shall please Thee. For it must needs be good: whatsoever Thou wilt do with me. If it be Thy will I should be in darkness blessed be Thou; and if it be Thy will I should be in light: be Thou again blessed. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me afflicted: be Thou ever equally blessed.

Son, thus shouldest thou stand: if thou desire to walk with Me. Thou shouldest be as ready to suffer: as to rejoice. Thou shouldest as cheerfully be destitute and poor: as full and rich.

Lord, for Thy sake I will cheerfully suffer: whatever shall come on me with Thy permission. From Thy hand I will receive indifferently good

and evil sweet and bitter joy and sorrow: and for all that befalls me I will be thankful. Keep me safe from all sin: and I shall fear neither death nor hell. So as Thou dost not for ever cast me from Thee,¹ nor blot me out of the book of life:² whatever tribulation may come upon me shall not hurt me.

CHAPTER XVIII

THAT TEMPORAL MISERIES MUST BE BORNE CALMLY AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

SON. I came down from Heaven for thy salvation; I took upon Me thy miseries not necessity but charity drawing me thereto: that thou mightest learn patience, and bear temporal miseries without complaint. For from the hour of My birth, to My death on the cross: I was not without suffering of grief. I suffered great want of things temporal; I often heard many complaints against Me: I endured with calmness shame and revilings; for benefits I received ingratitude: for miracles blasphemies, for doctrine reproofs.

Lord, for that Thou wert patient in Thy life-time, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father; it is reason that I a miserable sinner should bear myself patiently according to

¹ Psal. lxxvii. 7 (lxxvi. 8).

² Rev. iii. 5.

Thy will : and for my soul's welfare carry the burden of this mortal life as long as Thou shalt choose. For although this present life is felt to be a burden : yet is it now by Thy grace made very meritorious, and by Thy example and the footsteps of Thy Saints more endurable and clearer to the weak ; it is also much fuller of consolation than it was formerly under the old Law : when the gate of heaven remained shut, and even the way to heaven seemed darker ; when so few cared to seek after the kingdom of heaven : moreover they who then were just and heirs of salvation could not enter into the heavenly kingdom before Thy Passion and the due atonement of Thy holy death.

O what thanks am I bound to render unto Thee : that Thou hast deigned to shew unto me and to all faithful people the right and the good way to Thine eternal kingdom. For Thy life is our way : and by holy patience we walk toward Thee who art our Crown. If Thou hadst not gone before us and taught us ; who would care to follow ? Alas how many would remain afar off and behind : if they saw not Thy noble example. Behold we are still cold though we have heard of Thy many miracles and doctrines ; what would become of us if we had not so great Light whereby to follow Thee.

CHAPTER XIX

OF THE ENDURANCE OF INJURIES AND OF
THE PROOF OF TRUE PATIENCE

WHAT sayest thou Son? Cease to complain: when thou considerest My Passion and that of other saints. Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.¹ It is but little which thou sufferest in comparison of those who suffered so much, who were so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted: so many ways tried and harassed. Thou oughtest therefore to call to mind the heavier woes of others: that thou mayest the easier bear thy own small troubles. And if they seem unto thee not very small: then beware lest thy impatience be the cause of this also. However be they small or great: endeavour patiently to undergo them all.

The better thou disposest thyself to suffering: the more wisely thou doest and the ampler reward shalt thou receive; thou shalt also more easily endure: if both in mind and by habit thou art diligently prepared thereunto.

Do not say, I cannot bear these things at the hands of such an one; nor ought I to endure things of this sort, for he has done me great wrong, and charges me with things I never thought of: but of another I will cheerfully

¹ Heb. xii. 4.

suffer, and as I shall see I ought to suffer. Such a thought is foolish, it takes not into account the virtue of patience, nor by whom it will be crowned : but weighs the persons and the injuries offered to itself.

He is not truly patient who will not suffer except so far as he thinks right : and from whom he pleases. But the truly patient man minds not by whom he is vexed whether by his prelate, or by an equal or by an inferior : by a good and holy man or by one that is perverse and unworthy. But from every creature without distinction whatever and whenever annoyance befalls him, he takes it all thankfully from the hand of God and counts it great gain : for with God nothing however small if only it be suffered for God's sake can pass without reward.

Be thou therefore girded for the fight : if thou wilt have the victory. Without a conflict, thou canst not reach the crown of patience.¹ If thou wilt not suffer : thou art refusing to be crowned. But if thou desire to be crowned : fight manfully, endure patiently. Without toil there is no road to rest : nor without fighting can the victory be gained.

Lord make that possible to me by Thy grace : which by nature seems impossible. Thou knowest, that I can suffer but little : and that I am quickly

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 5.

cast down when a light opposition encounters me. For Thy Name's sake let every harassment of tribulation be made lovely and desirable to me: for to suffer and be disquieted for Thy sake, is very wholesome for my soul.

CHAPTER XX

OF THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF OUR OWN INFIRMITY AND OF THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE

I WILL confess against myself mine own unrighteousness: I will confess my infirmity unto Thee O Lord.¹

Oftentimes a small matter it is: that makes me sad and despondent. I resolve that I will act with courage; but when even a small temptation comes: I am in a great strait. Sometimes a very trifle it is: whence a great temptation arises. And while I think myself fairly safe when I least expect it: I sometimes find myself almost vanquished by a puff of wind.

Behold therefore Lord my lowness and my frailty which Thou knowest on every side; have mercy on me and draw me out of the mire lest I stick fast therein:² lest I remain utterly cast down. This it is that often strikes me backwards and confounds me in Thy sight: that I am so tottering

¹ Psal. xxxii. (xxxii.) 5.

² Psal. lxix. 14 (lxviii. 15).

and weak in resisting my passions. Although I do not altogether consent; yet their assaults are troublesome and grievous unto me: and it is very weary to live thus daily in strife. From hence my weakness becomes known unto me: that hateful fancies do always much more easily rush in than go away.

Most mighty God of Israel Thou zealous Lover of faithful souls O have respect unto the labour and sorrow of Thy servant: and stand by him in all that he undertakes.¹ Strengthen me with heavenly courage; lest the old man the wretched flesh not yet fully subdued to the Spirit get the dominion over me: against which it will be needful for me to fight, as long as breath remains in this miserable life.

Alas what kind of life is this: where tribulations and miseries are never wanting, where all is full of snares and enemies? For when one tribulation or temptation retreats another comes on; yea while the first conflict is yet enduring: many others come unexpected one after another. And how can a life be loved that hath so many embitterments; and is subject to so many calamities and miseries? How can it even be called a life; that begets so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved: and many seek to delight themselves therein. Oftentimes the world is

¹ Josh. i. 9.

blamed for being deceitful and vain ; and yet is it not easily renounced : because the desires of the flesh bear so great a sway. But some things draw us to love : others to despise. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life,¹ draw us to the love of the world : but the pains and miseries that justly follow them, cause hatred and weariness of the world.

But alas evil pleasure overcomes the mind that is given up to the world ; and he counts it a delight to be under thorns :² because he has neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God and the inward loveliness of virtue. But they who perfectly despise the world, and study to live to God under holy discipline ; these know well the divine sweetness promised to those who truly renounce : they also see more clearly, how grievously the world mistakes and is in many ways deceived.

CHAPTER XXI

THAT WE ARE TO REST IN GOD ABOVE ALL GOODS AND GIFTS

I

ABOVE all and in all O my soul thou shalt rest in the Lord alway : for He is the eternal Rest of the Saints.

Grant me O most sweet and loving Jesus to

¹ 1 John ii. 16.

² Job xxx. 7.

rest in Thee above all creatures ; above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour : above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtilty ; above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness : above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and comfort ; above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire : above all gifts and favours that Thou canst give and impart unto us ; above all mirth and jubilation, that the mind can receive and feel : finally above Angels and Archangels and above all the heavenly host ; above all things visible and invisible : and above all that Thou my God art not.

Because Thou O Lord my God art supremely good above all : Thou alone art most high Thou alone most powerful ; Thou alone most sufficient, and most full : Thou alone most sweet and solacing, Thou alone most lovely and loving ; Thou alone most noble and glorious above all things : in whom the sum of all good is united and perfect and ever has been and shall be ; and therefore all beside Thyselv is small and unsatisfying whatsoever Thou bestowest on me : or revealest of Thyselv or promisest if Thou art not seen nor fully obtained. For my heart cannot truly rest nor be entirely contented, unless it rest in Thee :¹ and pass above all gifts, and all creatures.

¹ Aug. Conf. i. 1 : *inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*

II

O my beloved Bridegroom Jesu Christ Thou purest Lover Thou Lord of all creation ; O that I had the wings of true freedom that I might flee away and rest in Thee.¹

O when shall it be fully granted me to be at ease and see how sweet Thou art O Lord my God?² When shall I fully gather myself up into Thee : that for love of Thee I may not feel myself, but Thee alone above all sense and measure : in a manner not known to all.

But now I often sigh : and bear my infelicity with grief. Because many evils meet me in this vale of miseries which often trouble sadden and overcloud me ; often hinder and distract, allure and entangle me : so that I can have no free access unto Thee, nor enjoy the sweet embraces which are ever ready for the blessed spirits.

Let my sighs move Thee and my manifold desolation here on earth : O Jesu Thou brightness of eternal glory,³ Thou comfort of the pilgrim soul. Heard of Thee is my voiceless tongue : and my silence speaketh unto Thee.

The preceding words may be suggested by another passage in the *Confessions*, xiii. 8 : *satis ostendis, quam magnam creaturam rationalem feceris, cui nullo modo sufficit ad beatam requiem quidquid te minus est.* H.

¹ Psal. lv. 6 (liv. 7).

² Psal. xxxiv. 8 (xxxiii. 9) : xlvi. 10 (xlv. 11), combined as in a previous passage, ii. 8.

³ Heb. i. 3.

How long doth my Lord delay His coming?
 Let Him come unto me His poor one: and
 make me glad. Let Him put forth His hand:
 and save a poor wretch from every difficulty.
 Come come: for without Thee no day nor hour
 is joyful: for Thou art my joy and without
 Thee my table is empty.

A wretched creature am I and in a manner
 imprisoned and loaded with fetters; until Thou
 refresh me with the light of Thy presence and
 grant me freedom: and shew a friendly counten-
 ance toward me.

Let others seek what they will instead of Thee;
 but for me nothing doth nor shall delight me:
 but Thou only my God my hope, my eternal
 salvation. I will not hold my peace nor cease
 to pray; until Thy grace return again: and Thou
 speak unto me within.

Behold here I am; behold I come unto thee:
 for thou hast called Me. Thy tears and the
 desire of thy soul: thy humiliation and thy con-
 trition of heart have inclined and brought Me
 unto Thee.

And I said. Lord I have called Thee, and
 desired to enjoy Thee: being ready to refuse all
 things for Thy sake. For Thou first hast roused
 me:¹ that I might seek Thee. Blessed be Thou

¹ *Prior excitasti.* Here again compare Aug. *Confessions*, i. 1: *Da mihi, Domine, scire et intelligere utrum sit prius inuocare te, an laudare te.*

therefore Lord : that hast shewed this goodness to Thy servant according to the multitude of Thy mercies.

What more hath Thy servant to say before Thee? he can but humble himself to the dust in Thy sight, ever mindful of his iniquity and vileness. For there is none like unto Thee : in all the wonders of heaven and earth. Thy works are very good ; Thy judgments true : and by Thy providence the universe is governed. Praise therefore and glory be unto Thee O Wisdom of the Father ; and let my mouth praise and bless Thee : my soul and all creation together.

CHAPTER XXII

OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF GOD'S MANIFOLD BENEFITS

OPEN Lord my heart in Thy law : and teach me to walk in Thy commandments. Grant me to understand Thy will ; and with great reverence and diligent consideration to remember Thy benefits as well in general as in particular : that henceforward I may be able to give Thee thanks worthily.

But I know and confess : that I am not able even in the least point to give Thee due thanks and praise. I am less than the least of

all Thy benefits ; and when I consider Thine excellency : the greatness thereof makes my spirit faint.

All that we have in soul and in body, and whatsoever we possess without or within naturally or supernaturally are Thy benefits ; and proclaim Thee bountiful merciful and good : from whom we have received all good things.

Although one have received more another less ; yet all are Thine : and without Thee even the least blessing cannot be had.

He that has received the greater cannot boast of his own desert : nor uplift himself above others, nor triumph over the lesser ; for he is the greatest and the best who ascribes least unto himself : and in rendering thanks is the most humble and devout. And he that thinks himself meanest of all and judges himself most unworthy : is fittest to receive the greater blessings.

But he that has received fewer : ought not to be out of heart nor complain, nor envy the richer ; but rather he should fix his mind on Thee and exceedingly praise Thy goodness : for that Thou bestowest Thy gifts so bountifully, so freely and willingly without respect of persons.

All things come from Thee : and therefore in all Thou art to be praised. Thou knowest what should be given to each ; and why this man should have less and that more, it is not

for us to judge but for Thee : who dost exactly mark each one's deserts.

Wherefore Lord God I count it even a great mercy not to have much of that which outwardly and in the opinion of men seems worthy of praise and glory : so that he who considers the poverty and meanness of his own person should be so far from feeling grief or sadness or despondency thereat ; that he should rather take great comfort and be glad : because Thou O God hast chosen the poor and humble and the despised of this world, for Thy own familiar attendants.

Witnesses are Thy Apostles themselves : whom Thou hast made princes over all the earth.¹ And yet they lived in the world without complaint : so humble and simple so free from all malice and deceit ; that they even rejoiced to suffer reproach for Thy name :² and what the world abhors they embraced with great affection.

When therefore a man loves Thee and recognises Thy benefits nothing ought so to rejoice him : as Thy will toward him and the good pleasure of Thine eternal appointment ; and herewith he ought to be so contented and comforted : that he would as willingly be least as another would wish to be greatest ; and as pacific and contented in the last place as in the first : as willing to be a despised cast-away of no name or

¹ Psal. xlv. 16 (xliv. 17).

² Acts v. 41.

fame, as to be preferred in honour before others and greater in the world. For Thy will and the love of Thy glory should outweigh all else; and comfort him more and please him better: than all the benefits which he hath received or may receive.

CHAPTER XXIII

OF FOUR THINGS THAT BRING MUCH PEACE

SON, now will I teach thee the way of peace and true freedom.

Lord do as Thou sayest: for this is delightful to me to hear.

Study son to do the will of another rather than thine own.

Choose always to have less rather than more.

Seek always the lowest place: and to be inferior to every one.

Wish always and pray: that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in thee.

Behold such a man enters the land of peace and rest.

Lord this brief discourse of Thine: contains within itself much perfection. It is small in speech: but full of meaning and rich in fruit. For if I could faithfully keep it: I should not be so easily disturbed. For as often as I feel myself restless and heavy: I find that I have

gone back from this doctrine. But Thou who canst do all things and ever lovest the profit of my soul ; increase in me Thy grace : that I may be able to fulfil Thy words, and to work out my salvation.

A PRAYER AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS

Lord my God be not Thou far from me : my God have regard to help me ;¹ for there have risen up against me various thoughts and great fears : afflicting my soul. How shall I pass through unhurt ? how shall I break them to pieces ?

I will go before thee saith He : and will humble the great ones of the earth. I will open the doors of the prison : and reveal unto thee hidden secrets.²

Do Lord as Thou sayest : and let all evil thoughts fly from Thy face. This is my hope my one only consolation, to flee unto Thee in every tribulation ; to trust in Thee, to call upon Thee from my inmost heart : and to wait patiently for Thy consolation.

A PRAYER FOR MENTAL ILLUMINATION

O good Jesu enlighten me with the shining of inner light : and remove away all darkness from the habitation of my heart. Repress Thou my

¹ Psal. lxxi. (lxx.) 12.

² Is. xlv. 2, 3.

many wandering thoughts: and break in pieces those temptations which violently assault me. Fight Thou strongly for me and vanquish the evil beasts,¹ I mean the alluring desires of the flesh; that peace may be obtained by Thy power:² and that Thine abundant praise may resound in Thy holy court that is in a pure conscience. Command the winds and tempests: say unto the sea Be still³ and to the north wind Blow not: and there shall be a great calm. Send out Thy Light and Thy Truth⁴ that they may shine upon the earth; for I am earth without form and void:⁵ until Thou enlighten me. Pour forth Thy grace from above, sprinkle my heart with heavenly dew; supply streams of devotion, to water the face of the earth: that it may bring forth fruit good and excellent.

Lift Thou up my mind which is pressed down by a load of sins: and draw up my whole desire to things heavenly; that when I have tasted the sweetness of celestial happiness: it may be irksome to me to think about earthly things. Do Thou snatch me and deliver me from all fleeting comfort of created things: for no created thing can fully satisfy my desires or console.

Join Thou me to Thyself with an inseparable band of love; for Thou alone canst satisfy him

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 32: Titus i. 12.

² Psal. cxxi. 7 (Vulgate).

³ Psal. xlivi. (xlvi.) 3.

⁴ Matt. viii. 26.

⁵ Gen. i. 2.

that loves: and without Thee all things are futile.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF AVOIDING CURIOUS ENQUIRY INTO OTHER MEN'S LIVES

SON, be not curious: nor trouble thyself with idle anxieties. What is this or that to thee: follow thou Me.¹ For what is it to thee whether that man be such or such; or this man do or speak this or that? Thou needest not answer for others: but shalt give account for thyself. Why then dost thou entangle thyself?

Behold I know every one and see all things that are done beneath the sun; and I understand how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he wishes: and at what his intention aims. To Me therefore all things are to be left, but do thou keep thyself in good peace: and let the unquiet be as unquiet as they will. Whatsoever they have done or said shall come upon them: for Me they cannot deceive.

Care not for the shadow of a great name;² nor for the familiar friendship of many: nor for

¹ John xxi. 22.

² Lucan, *Phars.* i. 135; but the quotation is borrowed probably from the *First Sermon on the Circumcision* of St. Bernard: *Non est in eo (Jesu) magni nominis umbra, sed ueritas.* H.

the private affection of men. For these things distract the heart : and greatly darken it.

Willingly would I speak My word and reveal My secrets unto Thee ; if thou wouldest diligently watch for My coming : and open unto Me the door of thine heart. Look to the future, and watch in prayer :¹ and in all things humble thyself.

CHAPTER XXV

WHEREIN FIRM PEACE OF HEART AND TRUE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS CONSISTETH

SON. I have spoken Peace I leave with you My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth give I unto you.²

Peace is what all desire : but not all care for the things that pertain unto true peace. My peace is with the humble and gentle of heart.³ In much patience shall thy peace be. If thou wilt hear Me and follow My voice : thou shalt enjoy much peace.

What then shall I do ?

In every matter look to thyself what thou doest and what thou sayest ; and direct thy whole intention unto this, that thou mayest please Me alone : and neither desire nor seek any thing besides Me ; but of the words or deeds of others

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 7.

² John xiv. 27.

³ Matt. xi. 29.

judge nothing hastily, neither do thou entangle thyself with things not committed unto thee : and thou wilt be little or seldom disturbed. But never to feel any disquiet, nor to suffer any trouble of heart or body ; belongs not to this life : but to the state of eternal Rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace if thou feel no heaviness ; nor that then all is well, if thou art vexed with no adversary : nor that to be perfect is to have all things happen according to thy desire ; neither do thou then think highly of thyself, or account thyself to be specially beloved : if thou be in great devotion and sweetness ; for not by these things is a true lover of virtue known : nor doth the progress and perfection of a man consist in these things.

Where then Lord is it to be found ?

In surrendering thyself with all thy heart to the divine Will : not seeking thine own in great matters or in small, in time or in eternity ; so that with unchanged countenance thou abide in thanksgiving, amid prosperity and adversity : weighing all things with equal balance.¹

If thou art so brave and patient in hope, that when inward comfort is withdrawn, thou prepare thy heart to suffer even greater things ; and do not justify thyself as though thou oughtest not

¹ Pliny i. 7 : *Is demum profecto uitam aequa lance pensitabit, qui semper fragilitatis humanae memor fuerit.*

to suffer these afflictions or any so great: but justify Me in whatsoever I appoint and praise My Holy Name; then art thou walking in the true and right way of peace: and thou 'shalt have undoubted hope, to see My face again with exultation.

But if thou fully attain to contempt of thyself: know that thou shalt then enjoy abundance of peace as far as is possible for a sojourner like thee.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THE EXCELLENCY OF A FREE MIND WHICH
IS SOONER GAINED BY HUMBLE PRAYER
THAN BY READING

I

LORD this is the work of a perfect man: never to relax his mind from thought of heavenly things; and amidst many cares to pass as it were without care, not as one who feels not, but by the privilege of a free mind: cleaving to no creature with inordinate affection.

II

I beseech Thee my most gracious God preserve me from the cares of this life lest I be too much entangled therein; from the many necessities of the body, lest I be ensnared by pleasure: from all obstacles to the soul, lest I be broken and over-

thrown by troubles. I speak not of those things which worldly vanity pursues with all its heart ; but of those penal miseries which by the common curse of mortality weigh down and hinder the soul of Thy servant : that it cannot enter into the freedom of the Spirit so often as it would.

III

O my God Thou sweetness ineffable ; turn into bitterness for me, all carnal comfort which draws me away from the love of things eternal : and in evil manner allures me to itself by the view of some present delightsome good. Let me not be overcome O Lord let me not be overcome by flesh and blood ; let not the world and the brief glory thereof deceive me : let not the devil and his craft trip up my heels. Give me strength to resist ; patience to endure : constancy to persevere.

Give me instead of all the comforts of the world the sweetest unction of Thy Spirit : and in place of carnal love pour in the love of Thy name.

Behold meat drink raiment, and other commodities for the sustenance of the body : are a burden to the fervent spirit. Grant me to use such refreshments moderately : not to be entangled with excessive desire.

It is not lawful to cast away all things : because

nature must be sustained. But to require superfluities and those things that are more pleasurable the holy law forbids: for then the flesh would rebel against the Spirit. Herein I beseech Thee let Thy hand guide and teach me: that I may not exceed.¹

CHAPTER XXVII

THAT IT IS PRIVATE LOVE WHICH MOST
HINDERETH FROM THE CHIEFEST GOOD

SON. Thou must give all for all: and nothing must be thine own. Know thou that the love of thyself doth thee more hurt: than anything in the world. According to the love and affection which thou bearest: everything doth more or less cleave to thee. If thy love be pure simple and well-ordered: thou shalt be free from the bondage of things. Covet not: what thou mayest not have. Have not: what may hinder thee and rob thee of inward liberty.

Strange it is that thou committest not thyself wholly unto Me from the bottom of thy heart with all that thou canst desire or have. Why art thou wasted by vain grief; why wearied with superfluous cares? Stand to My good will: and thou shalt suffer no loss.

¹ *Ne quid nimium* is a proverb borrowed by the Latins from the Greeks.

If thou seek this or that, and wouldest be here or there the better to enjoy thy own profit and pleasure: thou shalt never be in quiet, nor free from trouble of mind; for in every thing some flaw will be found: and in every place there will be one to cross thee.

Man's welfare then lies not in things outward that he gains or amasses: but in despising them and utterly rooting them out from the heart. And this thou must understand not only of income and wealth; but of seeking after honour also and the desire of vain praise: which all pass with the world.

No place is safe: if the spirit of fervour be wanting. Neither shall that peace long continue which is sought from without: if the state of thy heart have no sure foundation. That is unless thou stand stedfast in Me: thou mayest change but not better thyself. For when the chance arises and is taken: thou shalt find what thou didst flee from and more.

A PRAYER FOR A CLEAN HEART AND
HEAVENLY WISDOM

Strengthen me O God by the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant me power to be strengthened in the inner man¹ and to empty my heart of all useless care and anguish: not to be dragged

¹ Eph. iii. 16.

about by various desires of anything mean or precious: but to look on all things as passing away, and on myself also as doomed to pass away with them; for nothing is lasting under the sun: where all is vanity and vexation of spirit.¹ O how wise is he that so considers them.

Lord grant me Heavenly wisdom that I may learn above all things to seek and to find Thee: above all things to taste and to love Thee: and to see all other things according to the rule of Thy wisdom as they are. Grant me prudence to avoid him that flatters me: and patience to endure him that contradicts me; because this is great wisdom, not to be blown about with every wind of words, nor to give ear to the false flattering siren:² for thus we shall go on securely in the way we have begun.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AGAINST THE TONGUES OF SLANDERERS

SON. Take it not hard if some think ill of thee: and speak what thou likest not to hear. Thou shouldest judge worse of thyself: and think no man weaker than thyself.

If thou dost walk inwardly: thou wilt not greatly heed words that pass. It is no small

¹ Eccles. i. 14; ii. 17, 26.

² There is possibly a reference to Pliny i. 10, 49.

prudence to keep silence in an evil time and inwardly to turn thyself to Me: and not be troubled by the judgment of men.

Let not thy peace be in the tongues of men. For whether they construe thee well or ill: thou art not therefore another man. Where are true peace and true glory? are they not in Me? And he that neither desires to please men nor fears to displease them: shall enjoy much peace.

From inordinate love and vain fear: arise all disquietness of heart and distraction of the senses.

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW WE OUGHT TO CALL UPON GOD AND TO BLESS HIM WHEN TRIBULATION IS UPON US

BLESSED be Thy Name O Lord for ever:¹ for that it is Thy will that this temptation and tribulation should come upon me. I cannot escape it; but must needs flee to Thee: that Thou mayest help me and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in affliction; and my heart is ill at ease: for I am much troubled with this present suffering. And now Beloved Father what shall I say? I am caught amidst straits. Save Thou me from this hour. Yet therefore came I unto this hour, that Thou mayest be glorified:² when I shall have been greatly

¹ Psal. cxiii. (cxii.) 2.

² John xii. 27, 28.

humbled and by Thee delivered. Let it please Thee Lord to deliver me: for poor wretch that I am what can I do; and whither shall I go without Thee? Grant me patience O Lord: once more. Help me my God; and I will not fear how grievously soever I be afflicted.

And now amidst these my troubles what shall I say?

Lord Thy will be done:¹ I have well deserved to be afflicted and weighed down. Certainly I ought to bear it; and O that I may bear it with patience: until the storm pass over and all be better. Yet Thy Almighty hand is able to take even this temptation from me; and to assuage the violence thereof that I utterly sink not: as oftentimes Thou hast dealt with me in the past O my God my Mercy. And the harder it is to me: the easier to Thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.²

CHAPTER XXX

OF CRAVING THE DIVINE AID AND ASSURANCE OF RECOVERING GRACE

SON. I am the Lord that giveth strength in the day of tribulation.³ Come unto Me: when it is not well with Thee.

¹ Matt. xxvi. 42. ² Psal. lxxvi. 11 (Vulgate). ³ Nahum i. 7.

This is that which chiefly hinders heavenly consolation: that thou art slow in turning thyself unto prayer. For before thou dost earnestly beseech Me; thou seekest in the meanwhile many comforts: and refreshest thyself in outward things. And hence it comes to pass that all doth little profit thee; until thou mark that I am He who rescues them that hope in Me: and that out of Me there is no prevailing help; nor useful counsel: no nor lasting remedy. But now that the storm is past take courage, renew thy health in the light of My mercies; for I am at hand saith the Lord to restore all not only wholly: but abundantly and above measure.

Is any thing hard to Me; or shall I be like one that saith and doeth not? Where is thy faith? Stand firmly, and with perseverance. Be long suffering, and brave: comfort will come to thee in due time. Wait wait for Me: I will come and heal thee.¹

It is a temptation that vexeth thee: and a vain fear that affrighteth thee. What doth anxiety about the chances of the future bring thee; but sorrow upon sorrow? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.² It is a vain thing and unprofitable to be vexed or glad about the future: which perhaps will never come to pass. But it is human to be deluded by fancies like these;

¹ Matt. viii. 7.

² Matt. vi. 34.

and a sign of courage as yet small: to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the Enemy. For so he may cozen and deceive thee he cares not whether it be by truth or by falsehood: nor whether he overthrow thee by love of the present, or fear of the future.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled: neither let it fear.¹ Trust in Me: and have confidence in My mercy. When thou thinkest thyself farthest off from Me: oftentimes I am nearest. When thou countest almost all as lost: then oftentimes the greatest gain of reward is close at hand. All is not lost: when things fall crosswise.

Judge not by the feeling of the moment; brood not upon any grief come whence it may nor take it: as though all hope of lifting up thy head were gone. Think not thyself wholly left; although for a time I have sent thee tribulation: or even have withdrawn thy desired comfort. For this is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven. And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and all My servants that you be harassed with trials: than that you should have all things as you wish.

I know thy secret thoughts: for it is very expedient for thy salvation that thou be left sometimes without taste of sweetness; lest per-

¹ John xiv. 1, 27.

haps thou shouldest be uplifted with thy prosperous estate: and desire to please thyself in that which thou art not.

What I have given I can take away: and I can restore it again when I please. When I give it it is Mine: when I withdraw it I take not thine; for Mine is every good gift: and every perfect gift.¹

If I send upon thee grief or any cross whatever: repine not, nor let thy heart fail thee; I can quickly raise thee up: and turn all thy heaviness into joy. Still I am righteous, and greatly to be praised: when I deal thus with thee. If thou art wise and seest truly: thou shouldest never mourn so dejectedly over thy trials; but rather rejoice and give thanks, yea count this thine especial joy: that I afflict thee with sorrows and do not spare.²

As the Father hath loved Me, I also love you,³ said I unto My beloved disciples: whom certainly I sent not forth to temporal joys but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to contempts: not to ease but to labours; not to rest: but to bring forth much fruit with patience.⁴ Son remember thou these words.

¹ James i. 17.

³ John xv. 9.

² Job vi. 10 (Vulgate).

⁴ Luke viii. 15.

CHAPTER XXXI

OF NEGLECTING ALL CREATURES THAT THE
CREATOR MAY BE FOUND

O LORD, sorely I need yet greater grace, if I am to reach that state: where neither man nor any creature shall be a hindrance unto me. For as long as any thing holds me back: I cannot freely take flight to Thee. Freely did he long to fly: who said. O that I had wings like a dove; and I will flee away and be at rest.¹

What is more restful that the single eye?² and what more free than one that desires nothing upon earth? A man ought therefore to rise above all creatures and perfectly to forsake himself: and stand in ecstasy of mind³ and see that Thou the Creator of all things art in nothing like the creature. And unless a man be detached from all creatures: he cannot freely fix his mind upon the divine.

For that is why there are few contemplative men to be found: because few know how to isolate themselves wholly from perishing creatures. From this there is need of much grace: to lift up the soul, and carry it above itself. And unless a

¹ Psal. lv. 6 (liv. 7).

² Matt. vi. 22.

³ *In excessu mentis stare.* *Excessus* is a common word among mystic Latin writers for *ecstasy*. It is taken from the Vulgate; compare Psal. xxx. 23; lxvii. 28: Acts x. 10; xi. 5.

man be lifted up in spirit and freed from all creatures and united wholly unto God ; whatsoever he knows, whatsoever he possesses : is of no great weight. For a long while shall he be small and grovel below : who thinks any thing great but the One only Infinite Eternal Good. And whatsoever is not God : is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is great difference, between the wisdom of an illuminated and devout man : and the knowledge of a learned and studious clerk. Far nobler is that learning which trickles down from above from the Divine influence : than that which is painfully amassed by the wit of man.

There are many that desire contemplation : but have no mind to practise what is required thereunto. It is also a great hindrance that men rest in symbols and sensible things : and take little care about perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, or what we pretend we that seem to be called spiritual ; that we take so much pains and are so full of anxiety about things transitory and mean : while we scarcely ever think of the inner life with full recollection of mind. Alas presently after brief recollection we rush out of doors : and weigh not our works with strict examination. We mind not where our affections lie : nor bewail the impurity of all our actions. For all flesh had

corrupted his way:¹ and therefore did the great deluge follow. Since then our inward affection is much corrupted: the act ensuing the gauge of the lack of inner vigour, must needs be corrupted also.

From a pure heart comes the fruit of a good life. We ask how much a man has done: but with what virtue he does it is not so carefully weighed. We ask whether he is brave rich handsome clever a good writer, a good singer, a good labourer: how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and inward is seldom heard.

Nature regards the outward things of a man: grace turns itself to the inward. The one is often disappointed: the other trusts in God and is not deceived.

CHAPTER XXXII

OF SELF-DENIAL AND RENOUNCING EVERY EVIL APPETITE

SON thou canst not possess perfect freedom: unless thou wholly renounce thyself. All proprietors² and lovers of self are bound in

¹ Gen. vi. 12.

² *Proprietors*. See the word *proprietarii* in Ducange. They were monks who, under any pretence whatever, kept hold of their private property. Honorius III. laid them all under excommunication, and

fetters, all the covetous the inquisitive the gossipers, who seek always what is pleasant not the things of Jesus Christ: and often devise and put together some building which will not stand. For all shall perish: that is not of God. Hold fast this short and pregnant saying. Forsake all and thou shalt find all; leave desire: and thou shalt find rest. Weigh this thoroughly in thy mind: and when thou hast fulfilled it thou shalt understand all things.

Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport: yea rather in this is included in brief all the perfection of the religious.

Son turn not away nor be cast down at once when thou hearest of the way of the perfect; but rather be challenged to higher things: at least to sigh after them in desire. Would it were so with thee and thou hadst advanced so far, as to be no longer a lover of thyself: but stand loyally at My beck, and at his whom I have appointed a father over thee; then shouldest thou exceedingly please Me: and all thy life would pass in joy and peace. Thou hast yet many things to abandon; which unless thou wholly resign up unto Me: thou shalt not attain to that which thou desirest.

I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the

every Palm Sunday this decree was read in Chapter. Gerard Groot borrowed from St. Bernard the saying that 'a religious man who possesses a farthing is not worth a farthing.'

fire that thou mayest become rich:¹ that is heavenly wisdom which treads under foot all things that are base. Set this above earthly wisdom: above all human and personal satisfaction.

I said thou shouldest buy mean things for things which among men are precious and high; for true heavenly wisdom seems very mean and small, and almost forgotten among men: as having no high thoughts of itself nor seeking to be magnified upon earth; many praise it with their lips, but in their life are far from it: yet is it the pearl of price² which is hidden from many.

CHAPTER XXXIII

OF INCONSTANCY OF HEART AND OF HAVING OUR FINAL INTENTION DIRECTED UNTO GOD

SON trust not to the feeling which is with thee now:³ it will quickly be changed into another. As long as thou livest thou art subject to change even against thy will; so that thou art found one while merry another sad, one while quiet another troubled: now devout now inde-

¹ Rev. iii. 18.

² Matt. xiii. 46.

³ St. Bernard, *de Consid.* i. 2: *Noli nimis credere affectui tuo, qui nunc est.* H.

vout; now diligent now listless:¹ now grave now frivolous. But he that is wise and well instructed in the Spirit standeth above these changeable things; not heeding what he feels in himself or which way the wind of instability blows: but so that the whole intention of his mind moves onwards to the right and wished for end. For thus he will remain one and the same and unshaken: with the single eye of his intention directed unceasingly towards Me amid all the shifts of circumstance. And the purer the eye of the intention is: the more steadily does a man make way through the veering blasts.

But in many the eye of a pure intention is dimmed: for the gaze is soon attracted to some pleasurable object which meets it: and it is rare to find one who is wholly free from the mole of self-seeking.² So of old the Jews came to Bethany to Martha and Mary, not for Jesus' sake only: but that they might see Lazarus also.³

The eye of our intention therefore must be purified that it may be single and right: and beyond all the various objects which may come between must be directed towards Me.

¹ *Listless, Accidiosus.* See the Essay on Accidie in Dean Paget's *Spirit of Discipline*.

² *A naeuo propriae exquisitionis.* There is probably a reference to Ovid, *Trist.* v. 13, 14: *Nullus in egregio corpore naeius erit.*

³ John xii. 9.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THAT GOD IS SWEET ABOVE ALL THINGS AND
IN ALL THINGS TO HIM THAT LOVETH

BEHOLD my God and my all.

What can I wish more ; and what happier
thing can I long for ?

O sweet and savoury word ; to him that is who
loveth the Word : not the world nor the things
that are in the world.¹

My God and my all.

To him that understands enough is said : and
to repeat it often is delightful to him that loveth.
For when Thou art present all things are delight-
ful : but when Thou art absent, all is wearisome.
Thou makest quietness of heart and great peace :
and festive joy. Thou makest us to think well
of all things and in all to praise Thee : neither
can any thing please long without Thee ; but if
it is to be pleasant and palatable : Thy grace must
be present, and it must be seasoned with the season-
ing of Thy Wisdom. If Thou art sweet, all is
sweet : if Thou art not sweet ; what can please ?

But the wise men of the world and they to
whom the flesh is sweet are poor in Thy sweet
wisdom :² for in the world is utter vanity, and in

¹ 1 John ii. 15.

² In this passage there is a play on the two meanings of the verb *sapio*, which may signify either *to be sweet* or *to be wise*.

the flesh is death. But they that follow Thee through contempt of worldly things and mortification of the flesh ; are known to be truly wise : for they are translated from vanity to truth from flesh to spirit. To these God is sweet ; and what good soever is found in creatures : they make the theme for praise of their Creator.

But great yea very great is the difference between the sweetness of the Creator and of the creature : of Eternity and of time : of Light uncreated and of light enlightened.

O Everlasting Light, surpassing all created luminaries : dart the beams of Thy brightness¹ from above and penetrate all the corners of my heart. Purify, beatify, beautify and vivify my spirit with all its powers : that I may cleave unto Thee with transports of jubilation.

O for the coming of that blessed and desirable hour ; when Thou wilt satisfy me with Thy Presence : and be unto me all in all.² So long as this is not granted : neither will my joy be full. Still alas the old man lives in me : not wholly is he crucified, not perfectly is he dead. Still lusts he mightily against the Spirit, stirs up inward wars :³ nor suffers the kingdom of the soul to be in peace.

But Thou that rulest the power of the sea and

¹ Psal. cxliv. (cxliii.) 6.

² 1 Cor. xv. 28.

³ Rom. vii. 23 : Gal. v. 17.

stillest the tossing of its waves :¹ arise and help me. Scatter the nations that delight in war :² quell Thou them in Thy might ; shew forth Thy wonderful works³ I beseech Thee : and let Thy right hand be glorified ; for there is no other hope or refuge for me : save in Thee O Lord my God.

CHAPTER XXXV

THAT THERE IS NO SAFETY FROM TEMPTATION IN THIS LIFE

I

SON. Thou art never safe in this life : but as long as thou livest thou shalt always need spiritual armour. Thou dwellest among foes : and art assailed on the right hand and on the left. If therefore thou defend not thyself on every side with the shield of patience : thou wilt not be long without a wound. Moreover if thou set not thy heart fixedly on Me with a sincere wish to suffer all things for Me : thou wilt not be able to bear the heat of the affray, nor to win the palm of the blessed. Thou must therefore manfully go through all : and use a strong hand against all

¹ Psal. lxxxix. 9 (lxxxviii. 10).

² Psal. lxviii. 30 (lxvii. 31).

³ *Magnalia*. The word occurs, Wisdom xviii. 24 : Acts ii. 11. It is used by Tertullian, *ad Uxorem* ii. 7 (see Oehler's note), and in the poem *against Marcion*, printed with Tertullian's works, i. 54. See also *Ducange*.

that withstands thee. For to him that overcomes is given Manna:¹ and for the sluggard there remains much misery.

II

If thou seek rest in this life; how wilt thou then attain to eternal Rest? Dispose not thyself for much rest: but for great patience. Seek true peace not on earth but in Heaven; not in men nor in any other creature: but in God alone. For the love of God thou must cheerfully undergo all things, that is to say toil and pain; temptation, vexation anxiety want infirmity injury obloquy reproof humiliation: shame chastisement and scorn. These help to virtue; these test the young soldiers of Christ: these fashion the heavenly crown. I will give eternal reward for momentary toil: and infinite glory for transient shame.

III

Thinkest thou that thou shalt always have spiritual consolations at thine own will?

My saints had not such always; but they bore many afflictions and various temptations: and great desolation. Nevertheless in all they bore up with patience; and trusted rather in God than in themselves: knowing that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to deserve the future glory.²

¹ Rev. ii. 17.

² Rom. viii. 18.

Wilt thou have now ; what many after many tears and great toils have hardly won ?

Wait for the Lord quit thyself like a man, and be strong ; distrust not desert not : but boldly risk both body and soul for the glory of God. I will reward thee bountifully : I will be with thee in every tribulation.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AGAINST THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MEN

SON. Cast thy heart firmly on the Lord ; and fear not the judgment of men : when conscience pronounces thee dutiful and innocent. It is good and happy to suffer thus : nor will this be grievous to a humble heart, which trusts in God rather than in itself.

Many men say many things : and therefore little is to be believed. Moreover to satisfy all : is not possible. Although Paul studied to please all men in the Lord, and became all things to all :¹ yet with him it was a very small thing that he should be judged by the light of men.² He laboured for the edification and salvation of others as far as he might or could : yet was he judged and despised at times by others, and could not prevent it. Therefore he committed all to God

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 22.

² 1 Cor. iv. 3.

who knew all : and with patience and humbleness did he defend himself against the mouth of men who spoke injustice, or thought vanities and falsehoods and uttered what they had a mind.

Yet at times he made answer : lest the weak should be offended by his silence.

Who art thou that thou shouldest fear a mortal man ? to-day he is : and to-morrow he is not seen.¹ Fear God : and thou shalt not dread the threats of men. How can any hurt thee by word or deed ? he wounds himself rather than thee : nor shall he escape the judgment of God whosoever he be.

Do thou keep God before thine eyes : and contend not with peevish words. And though for the present thou seem to be worsted, and to suffer shame which thou hast not deserved : repine not therefore, neither mar thy crown with impatience ; but look up to Me in heaven, who am able to rescue thee from all shame and wrong : and to render to every man according to his works.²

¹ Is. li. 12.

² Matt. xvi. 27 : Rom. ii. 6.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OF PURE AND ENTIRE RESIGNATION OF
OURSELVES FOR THE OBTAINING
FREEDOM OF HEART

SON. Forsake thyself: and thou shalt find Me. Stay where thou art making no choice nor calling ought thine own: and thou shalt always be a gainer. For even greater grace shall be added to thee: the moment thou dost renounce thyself, provided thou dost not take thyself again.

Lord how often shall I renounce myself; and wherein shall I forsake myself?

Always yea every hour: in great things as in small. I except nothing: but will that thou be found stripped of all things. Otherwise how canst thou be Mine and I thine; unless thou be despoiled of all self-will within and without? The sooner thou doest this the better it will be with thee; and the more fully thou doest it and sincerely: the more shalt thou please Me, and the greater shall be thy gain.

Some there are who renounce themselves: but with reservation; for they put not their full trust in God: therefore they study how to provide for themselves. Some also at first do offer all; but afterwards when temptation knocks at the door they return again to their own: and therefore make no progress in virtue. These shall not

attain to the true freedom of a pure heart, nor to the grace of My sweet familiarity, unless they first make an entire resignation and a daily oblation of themselves: without this there neither is nor can be lasting fruitful union.

Often have I said unto thee: and now again I say. Forsake thyself, renounce thyself: and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace. Give all for all, make no exception, ask no return; abide purely and unhesitatingly in Me: and thou shalt possess Me. Thou shalt be free in heart: and darkness shall not tread thee down.¹ Let this be thy aim, this thy prayer, this thy desire: that thou mayest be stript of all that is thine and naked follow Jesus naked; mayest die to thyself: and live eternally to Me. Then shall come to an end all vain fancies: unrighteous anxieties, and superfluous cares. Then also immoderate fear shall depart: and inordinate love shall die.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

OF GOOD GOVERNMENT IN THINGS EXTERNAL AND OF RE COURSE TO GOD IN DANGERS

I

SON. Endeavour with diligence, that in every place and outward action or occupation thou mayest be inwardly free and master of thyself;

¹ Psal. cxxxviii. 11 (Vulgate).

and that all things be under thee and not thou under them : thou that be lord and ruler of thine actions, and not a slave or a hireling ; but rather a freed man and a true Hebrew passing over into the lot and freedom of the sons of God : who stand above things present and contemplate things eternal ; who with the left eye look on the transient and with the right on the heavenly :¹ who are not allured by the temporal to cleave unto it ; rather they draw the temporal things to serve them well in such ways as are ordained by God and appointed by the Great Work-master : who hath left nothing in His creation without due order.²

II

If too in all circumstances thou standest not in the outward appearance, nor viewest what thou seest and hearest with a carnal eye ; but presently in every affair dost enter with Moses into the Tabernacle to ask counsel of the Lord ;³ thou shalt sometimes hear the divine oracle : and shalt return instructed concerning many things both

¹ Richard of St. Victor, part ii. fol. xxvi d, speaks of man as having two inner eyes, the left of circumspection, the right of discretion. In the *Theol. Germ.*, chap. vii. (Miss Winkworth's Trans.), the soul of Christ has two eyes ; the right is fixed upon eternity, the left beholds the creature.

² There is perhaps a reference to Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, i. 12 : *Deum uero non decet aliquid in suo regno inordinatum dimittere.*

³ Ex. xxxiii. 9.

present and to come. For Moses always had recourse to the Tabernacle for the solution of doubts and questions: and fled to the help of prayer for support under dangers and the iniquity of men. So do thou in like manner take refuge within the closet of thine heart:¹ earnestly craving the divine advocacy. For we read that Joshua and the children of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites, because they asked not counsel beforehand at the mouth of the Lord:² but trusting too easily to fair words, were deluded by stolen pity.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE FRETFUL IN MATTERS OF BUSINESS

I

SON. Always commit thy cause to Me: I will dispose of it well in due time. Wait for My ordering: and thou shalt find it for thy good.

Lord I do most cheerfully commit all unto Thee: for my care can little avail. Would that I did not so much dwell on future events: but gave myself up without reluctance to Thy good pleasure.

¹ Matt. vi. 6.

² Joshua ix. 14.

II

Son oftentimes a man schemes eagerly for what he desires : but when he has attained it, he begins to be of another mind ; for the affections do not long hover round the same object : but rather drive us from one to another. It is therefore no small gain for a man to forsake himself even in the smallest things. The true growth of a man : is the denying of himself. And he that is thus denied : is very free and safe. But the old Enemy who sets himself against all good never ceases from tempting ; but day and night lays deadly snares : if by any means he may trip the unwary in the noose of deceit.

Watch and pray saith the Lord : that ye enter not into temptation ?¹

CHAPTER XL

THAT MAN HATH NO GOOD OF HIMSELF NOR
ANY THING WHEREOF HE CAN GLORY

I

LORD what is man, that Thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man that Thou visitest him ?² What hath man deserved ; that Thou shouldest grant him Thy favour ?

Lord how can I complain if Thou forsake

¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

² Psal. viii. 4 (5).

me ; or if Thou do not what I desire how can I justly demur ?¹ Surely this I may truly think and say. Lord I am nothing, I can do nothing ; I have nothing that is good of myself : but in all things I fall away, and am ever on the road to nothing. And unless Thou help me and form me within : I am all cold and unbraced.

But Thou Lord art always The Same and endurest for ever always Good Just and Holy : and all Thy doings are good just and holy and ordered in wisdom ; but I that am more ready to go backward than forward, do not ever continue in one estate : for seven times are passed over me.²

Nevertheless it soon becomes better if it is Thy pleasure and Thou stretchest forth a helping hand : for Thou alone without human aid canst help me, and so strengthen me ; that my countenance shall no more be changed :³ but my heart shall turn to Thee alone and be at rest.

Wherefore could I but throw away all human consolation, either for the attainment of devotion : or because of my necessities which enforce me to seek after Thee, for no mortal man can comfort me ; then might I well hope in Thy grace : and exult in the gift of new consolation.

¹ Gen. xliv. 16 (Vulgate).

² Dan. iv. 16, 23, 25.

³ 1 Sam. i. 18 (Vulgate).

II

Thanks be unto Thee from whom all things come : whensoever it goes well with me.

But I am vanity and nothing in Thy sight : a man unstable and infirm. Whereof then can I glory ; or for what do I desire to be respected ? Is it for nothing ? this too is most vain. Of a truth vain glory is an evil plague the worst of vanities ; because it draws a man from true glory : and robs him of heavenly grace. For whilst he pleases himself he displeases Thee : whilst he gapes after the praise of men he is bereft of true virtues. But true glory and holy exultation, is for a man to glory in Thee and not in himself : to rejoice in Thy name not in his own power : nor to take delight in any creature except it be for Thy sake.

Praised be Thy name not mine : magnified be Thy work not mine ; blessed be Thy Holy Name : but to me let no part of men's praises be given. Thou art my glory Thou art the joy of my heart ; in Thee will I glory and exult all the day : but as for myself I will not glory but in mine infirmities.¹ Let Jews seek honour one of another :² be it mine to look for that which comes from God alone. For all human glory, all temporal honour, all worldly dignity, compared

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 5.

² John v. 44.

to Thy eternal glory: is vanity and folly. O my Truth and my Mercy my God Blessed Trinity; to Thee alone be praise honour power glory: for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XLI

OF THE CONTEMPT OF ALL TEMPORAL HONOUR

SON take it not to heart, if thou see others honoured and advanced: but thyself despised and debased. Lift up thy heart unto heaven to Me: and the contempt of men on earth will not sadden thee.

Lord we are in blindness: and are quickly misled by vanity. If I look rightly into myself; no creature has ever done me wrong: and therefore I cannot justly complain before Thee. But because I have often and grievously sinned against Thee: all creatures do justly take arms against me.

Unto me therefore shame and contempt are justly due: but unto Thee praise honour and glory. And unless I school myself with cheerful willingness to be despised and forsaken of all creatures, and to seem entirely nothing; I cannot obtain inward peace and stability: nor be spiritually enlightened nor fully united unto Thee.

CHAPTER XLII

THAT OUR PEACE IS NOT TO BE SET ON MEN

SON. If thou art drawn to rest thy peace on any person by feeling or familiar intercourse: thou wilt become unstable and enmeshed.

But if thou apply thyself unto the ever-living and abiding Truth: the desertion or death of a friend will not grieve thee. Thy love for thy friend should be grounded in Me; and for My sake shouldest thou love those who seem good unto thee: and very dear in this life. Without Me friendship has no strength nor continuance; neither is that love true and pure: which is not knit by Me. So dead shouldest thou be to such affection for beloved men: that so far as thou art concerned thou wouldest choose to be without all human company.

Man approaches the nearer unto God: the farther he retires from all earthly comfort. And he mounts higher towards God: as he sinks lower into himself and grows viler in his own eyes. But he that ascribes any good unto himself; hinders God's grace from coming into him: because the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeks a humble heart.

If thou couldest perfectly annihilate thyself and empty thyself of all created love: then should

I overflow into thee with great grace.¹ When thou lookest to creatures: the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn in all things to master thyself for the sake of thy Creator: then shalt thou be able to attain unto divine knowledge. All inordinate love and regard be it never so slight: keeps back from the highest and pollutes.

CHAPTER XLIII

AGAINST VAIN AND SECULAR KNOWLEDGE

SON. Let not the fine and subtle sayings of men bewitch thee. For the Kingdom of God is not in word: but in power.² Hearken to My words which kindle hearts and enlighten minds: which bring compunction and supply variety of consolation.

Never read thou the word: in order to appear more learned or wiser. Study the mortification of thy vices: for this will profit thee more than the knowledge of many knotty questions. When

¹ *Tunc deberem in te cum magna gratia emanare.* This is perhaps the best instance of the use of *debeo* in the sense of the auxiliary *should*, without any notion of obligation. Other cases are iv. 23, *non deberet tam facilis in me turbatio oriri*: ii. 7, *Jesus deberet libenter tecum habitare*: ii. 5, *si debes habere pacem*. It is the most striking of the Germanisms which form a strong point in the Kempist case. See Hirsche, *Prolegomena* iii. p. 3.

² 1 Cor. iv. 20.

thou hast read and learned many things: thou must ever return to the one Beginning. I am He, that teacheth man knowledge;¹ and I bestow a clearer understanding on little children: than can be taught by man. He to whom I speak shall quickly be wise: and shall profit much in the Spirit.

Woe to them that enquire many curious things of men: and take small care about the way of serving Me. The time will come when the Master of masters Christ the Lord of Angels shall appear, to hear the lessons of all: that is to examine the conscience of every one; and then will He search Jerusalem with candles:² and the hidden things of darkness shall be laid open,³ and the logic of tongues shall be hushed.

I am He who in one instant lifts up the humble mind; to understand more reasonings of eternal Truth: than if one had studied ten years in the schools. I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions: without pride of emulation, without fence of logic. I am He who teaches men to despise the earthly to weary of the present; to seek the eternal, to know the eternal: to flee honours, to endure offences; to place all hope in Me, out of Me to desire nothing: and above all things ardently to love Me.

For there was one who by loving me in his

¹ Psal. xciv. (xciii.) 10.

² Zeph. i. 12.

³ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

inmost soul, learned divine truths: and spoke marvels. He made greater progress by forsaking all things: than by studying subtle niceties.

But to some men I speak plain truths to others special secrets; to some I gently shew Myself in signs and figures: whilst to some I reveal mysteries in much light. The voice of books is one but informs not all alike; for I within am the teacher of the Truth the searcher of the heart the discerner of thoughts, the prompter of actions: distributing to every man as I judge meet.¹

CHAPTER XLIV

OF NOT DRAWING TO OURSELVES OUTWARD THINGS

I

SON. In many things thou must be ignorant, and reckon thyself as one dead upon the earth, to whom the whole world is crucified.² Many things too thou must pass by with a deaf ear, and think the more, of those which belong unto thy peace.

It is better to turn away one's eyes from unpleasing subjects, and leave each person to his own opinion, than become a slave to wrangling debates. If thou standest well with God, and

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

² Gal. vi. 14.

lookest toward His judgment, thou shalt easily bear defeat.

II

O Lord, to what a pass are we come ? Behold men weep for a temporal loss ; for a pitiful gain they toil and run : while spiritual loss is forgotten, and hardly at last do men turn back home. That which little, or nothing avails is studied, and that which is especially necessary, is carelessly passed over : because the whole man slides off to outward things and unless he speedily gets sense, he wallows in them and is content.

CHAPTER XLV

THAT CREDIT IS NOT TO BE GIVEN TO ALL
AND THAT MAN IS PRONE TO
OFFEND IN WORDS

I

GRANT me help Lord in tribulation, for vain is the help of man.¹

How often have I not met with faithfulness there, where I thought myself sure of it. How often too have I found it there, where I least expected it. It is vain therefore to have hope in men, but the salvation of the righteous is in Thee O God.

¹ Psal. lx. 11 (lix. 13).

Blessed be Thou O Lord my God, in all things that befall us.

We are weak and unstable, quickly are we deceived and quite changed. What man is there, that is able in all things so warily and circumspectly to keep himself, as never to come into any deception or perplexity? But he that trusts in Thee O Lord, and seeks Thee with a single heart, does not so easily slip. And if he fall into any tribulation, be he never so deeply entangled, yet shall he quickly through Thee be delivered, or by Thee be comforted: for Thou wilt not abandon him that hopes in Thee even to the end.

Rare is the loyal friend, that stands fast in all his friend's distresses. Thou O Lord, Thou alone art most trusty at all times, and there is none other like unto Thee.

II

O how wise was that holy soul, which said. My mind is firmly settled, and grounded in Christ.¹ If thus it were with me, the fear of man would not so easily vex me, nor darts of words alarm me.

Who can foresee, who can guard against future evils? If even the foreseen often hurt us, how

¹ The words are those of St. Agatha, who was martyred at Catana, in the persecution of Decius, A.D. 251. See the Bollandist *Acta Sanctorum*, Febr. 5, iii. 615.

cruelly must the unforeseen wound us? But wretch as I am why did I not read my future better? why too did I so lightly give credit to others? But we are men, and nothing but frail men, even though we are thought and called angels by many. Whom shall I trust Lord? whom, but Thee? Thou art the Truth, which never deceives, nor can be deceived. And on the other hand every man is a liar,¹ weak, inconstant, and ready to fall especially in words: and therefore we must hardly give instant belief, even to that which on the face of it seems to sound right.

For wisely hast thou warned us to beware of men;² and that a man's foes are they of his own household:³ and not to give credit if one should say Lo here or Lo there.⁴ My hurt has been my instructor: and would it may teach me caution and not folly.⁵ Be wary saith one be wary: keep to thyself what I say to thee. And whilst I hold my peace and think the thing secret; he himself cannot keep that which he desired me to keep: but presently betrays both me and himself and is gone. From such vain talk and from men of indiscretion O Lord

¹ Psal. cxvi. 11 (cxv. 2): Rom. iii. 4.

² Matt. x. 17.

³ Micah vii. 6: Matt. x. 36.

⁴ Matt. xxiv. 23: Mark xiii. 21: Luke xvii. 23.

⁵ Psal. xxi. 3 (Vulgate).

deliver me that I neither fall into their hands: nor ever do the like. Put a true and trusty word in my mouth: and keep far from me a crafty tongue. What I do not like to suffer: I ought by all means to shun.

III

O how good is it and fruitful of peace, to be silent about other men; and not to believe indifferently all that is said, nor carelessly hand on reports: to lay one's self open to few; and ever seek Thee who readest the heart,¹ and not to be carried about with every wind of words:² but to desire that all things both within and without be accomplished according to the pleasure of Thy will.

How safe is it for the keeping of heavenly grace to avoid human shew; and not to pursue those things which seem to cause admiration from without: but follow with all diligence the things which bring amendment of life and zeal. How many has it spoiled that their excellence was known and too soon commended; how rich has been the profit of grace guarded by silence in this frail life: which as we are taught is all temptation and warfare.³

¹ Prov. xxiv. 12.

² Eph. iv. 14.

³ Job vii. 1 (Vulgate and LXX. combined).

CHAPTER XLVI

OF PUTTING OUR TRUST IN GOD WHEN DARTS
OF WORDS ASSAIL US

SON. Stand firm and trust in Me.

For what are words but words? They fly through the air: but they cannot hurt a stone. If thou art guilty: think that thou wouldest gladly amend thyself. If conscience reproach thee not: consider that thou wouldest gladly suffer this for God's sake. Little enough it is to suffer sometimes at least from words: since thou hast not yet the courage to endure hard blows. And why do such trifles go to thy heart; but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou oughtest? For because thou art afraid of being despised thou art unwilling to be reproved for thy faults: and seekest the shelter of excuses.

But look better into thyself, and thou shalt acknowledge that the world is yet alive in thee: and a vain desire to please men. For when thou shrinkest from being abased and confounded for thy faults; it is evident thou art neither truly humble: nor truly dead to the world, nor the world crucified to thee. But do thou give ear to My word: and thou shalt not care for ten thousand words of men. Behold if all were

spoken against thee that could be most maliciously invented; what would it hurt thee, if thou wouldest suffer it to pass entirely by thee, and count it no more than a mote? could it so much as pluck one hair from thy head?¹

But he that has no heart within nor has God before his eyes: is easily vexed with a word of dispraise. Whereas he that trusteth in Me nor desires to stand in his own judgment: shall be free from the fear of men. For I am the Judge and the Discerner of all secrets;² I know how the matter passed: I know who did the wrong and who suffered it. From Me came forth that word; by My permission did this happen: that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.³ I shall judge the guilty and the innocent: but by a secret judgment I have thought fit to prove them both beforehand.

The witness of men often deceives; My judgment is true: it shall stand and shall not be overthrown. For the most part it lies hid and is manifest in special but to few; yet it never errs nor can err: although to the eyes of the foolish it may seem not right. To Me therefore men ought to appeal in every judgment: and not to lean on their own opinion. For the just man will not be disturbed: whatsoever befalls

¹ Luke xxi. 18: Acts xxvii. 34.

² Dan. xiii. 42 (Vulgate).

³ Luke ii. 35.

him¹ from God. Even if an unjust charge be laid against him: he will not greatly care. Nor again will he vainly exult: if through others he be justly vindicated. For he remembers that I am He that searches the hearts and reins:² and judges not according to the face and human appearance.³ For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in My sight: which in the judgment of men is thought to be commendable.

O Lord God Thou just judge strong and patient,⁴ Thou who knowest the frailty and wickedness of men; be Thou my strength and all my confidence: for my conscience suffices me not. Thou knowest what I know not: and therefore under all blame I ought to have humbled myself and borne it meekly. Of Thy mercy then forgive me, whenever I have acted otherwise: and once again grant me the grace of larger endurance. For Thy overflowing pity is a surer way to obtain pardon: than any fancied righteousness of my own to excuse my latent misgivings. Although I know nothing by myself: yet I cannot hereby justify myself:⁵ for without Thy mercy in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.⁶

¹ Prov. xii. 21.

² Rev. ii. 23: Psal. vii. 9 (10).

³ 1 Sam. xvi. 7: John vii. 24.

⁴ Psal. vii. 12 (Vulgate).

⁵ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

⁶ Psal. cxlii. (cxlii.) 2.

CHAPTER XLVII

THAT ALL GRIEVOUS THINGS ARE TO BE
ENDURED FOR THE SAKE OF
ETERNAL LIFE

I

SON. Be not wearied out by the labours which thou hast undertaken for My sake nor let tribulations cast thee down at all: but let My promise strengthen and comfort thee under every circumstance. I am well able to reward thee, above all degree and measure.

Thou shalt not long toil here: nor always be oppressed with griefs. Wait a little while: and thou shalt see a speedy end of thine evils. There will come an hour: when all toil and tumult shall cease. Poor and brief: is all that passes with time.

Do what thou hast to do; labour faithfully in My vineyard: I will be thy recompence.¹ Write read chant, mourn keep silence pray; endure crosses like a man: life eternal is worth all these conflicts and greater. Peace shall come in a day which is known unto the Lord; and it shall be not day nor night² that is of this present time: but unfading light infinite brightness, steadfast peace and secure rest. Then thou shalt not say Who shall deliver me from the body of this

¹ Matt. xx. 7: Gen. xv. 1, combined.

² Zech. xiv. 7.

death ;¹ nor cry Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged :² for death shall be cast down headlong,³ and there shall be salvation which can never fail ; no anxiety, blessed gladness, society sweet and noble.

II

O if thou hadst seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven : and with what glory they now rejoice, who once were esteemed by this world as contemptible and in a manner unworthy of life itself ;⁴ truly thou wouldest forthwith humble thyself even to the earth, and wouldest rather seek to be under all than to be over one : neither wouldest thou covet this life's pleasant days ; but rather wouldest rejoice to suffer affliction for God : and esteem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

O if these things were sweet unto thee and sank into the bottom of thy heart ; how couldest thou dare so much as once to complain ? Are not all toils worth enduring for life eternal ? It is no small matter, to lose or gain the Kingdom of God. Lift up thy face therefore unto heaven ; behold, I and all My saints with Me : who in this world fought a weary battle. Now they rejoice, now are they comforted ; now safe now

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² Psal. cxx. (cxix.) 5.

³ Is. xxv. 8 (Vulgate).

⁴ Wisdom iii. 2 : v. 17.

at rest: and shall dwell with Me without end in the Kingdom of My Father.

CHAPTER XLVIII

OF THE DAY OF ETERNITY AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF THIS LIFE

O HOME most blessed in the City above. O cloudless day of eternity; which no night obscures: whose never setting sun is the Truth supreme; day ever joyful ever secure: and never changing into its contrary. O that that day had dawned: and that all these things of time had come to an end.

To the saints indeed it shines glorious with unfailing brightness: but to pilgrims on the earth only afar off and as in a glass.¹ The citizens of heaven know how joyful is that day: but the banished sons of Eve bewail the bitterness and weariness of this.

The days of this life are few and evil;² full of sorrows and difficulties: where man is defiled by many sins, ensnared by many passions; held fast by many fears, racked by many cares: distracted by many questionings, entangled by many vanities; compassed about with many errors, worn away with many labours burdened with

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Gen. xlvi. 9.

temptations: weakened by pleasures, tormented by want.

O when shall these evils have an end; when shall I be freed from the miserable bondage of vices? when shall I be mindful Lord of Thee alone; when shall I fully rejoice in Thee? When shall I enjoy true freedom without a hindrance, without trouble of mind or body? When shall I have solid peace peace undisturbed and secure; peace within and peace without, peace every way assured?

Good Jesu when shall I stand to behold Thee, when shall I gaze upon the glory of Thy Kingdom; when wilt Thou be unto me all in all?¹ O when shall I be with Thee in Thy Kingdom; which Thou hast prepared for Thy beloved ones from all eternity?² I am left a poor and banished man in the land of enemies: where there are daily wars, and great calamities. Comfort my banishment; assuage my sorrow: for my whole desire sighs after Thee.

For all is a burden to me: whatsoever this world offers for consolation. I long to enjoy Thee in my heart of hearts: but I cannot lay hold of Thee. I yearn to clasp the heavenly: but cares of earth and unmortified passions weigh me down. With the mind I would rise above all things: but by the flesh I am enforced against

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

² Matt. xxv. 34.

my will to be beneath them. Thus unhappy man that I am¹ I fight against myself; and am become a burden to myself:² whilst my spirit seeketh to be above and my flesh to be below.

O what do I inwardly suffer whilst in my mind I dwell on things heavenly: and presently a swarm of carnal thoughts besieges me while I pray. My God be not Thou far from me:³ nor turn away in wrath from Thy servant.⁴ Cast forth Thy lightning and disperse them: shoot out Thine arrows⁵ and let all the vain fancies of the Enemy be confounded. Call home my senses unto Thee: make me to forget all worldly things: enable me to cast away speedily and with scorn my sensual dreams. Succour me Thou Eternal Truth: that no vanity may shake me; come Thou heavenly Sweetness: and let all impurity flee before Thy face.

Pardon me also and in mercy deal gently with me: as often as in prayer I dwell on aught but Thee. For truly I confess: that I am wont to yield to many distractions. For often I am not there, where I am bodily standing or sitting; but there I am: whither my thoughts do carry me. Where my thoughts are there am I: there most usually are my thoughts, where my

¹ Rom. vii. 24.

² Job vii. 20.

³ Psal. lxxi. (lxx.) 12.

⁴ Psal. xxvii. (xxvi.) 9.

⁵ Psal. cxliv. (cxliii.) 6.

affection is. That readily occurs to me: which naturally brings delight or by custom is pleasing.

And for this cause Thou that art Truth hast plainly said. For where thy treasure is: there thy heart is also.¹ If I love heaven: I willingly muse on heavenly things. If I love the world; I rejoice with the felicity of the world: and grieve for the adversities thereof. If I love the flesh: I often imagine the things of the flesh. If I love the Spirit: I delight to think on things spiritual. For whatsoever I love; thereof do I gladly speak and hear: and carry home with me the ideas thereof.

But blessed is the man, who for Thy sake Lord gives all created things leave to depart; who does violence to nature: and through fervour of the spirit crucifies the lusts of the flesh; that so with serene conscience he may offer a pure prayer unto Thee: and may be worthy to stand among the choirs angelical, where no earthly thing can find a place of those that are within or those that are without.

¹ Matt. vi. 21.

CHAPTER XLIX

OF THE DESIRE OF EVERLASTING LIFE AND
WHAT REWARDS ARE PROMISED TO
THOSE THAT STRIVE

I

SON. When thou perceivest the desire of eternal bliss to be poured on thee from above, and longest to depart out of the tabernacle of the body,¹ that thou mayest be able to gaze upon My brightness² without shadow of turning :³ open thy heart wide and receive this holy inspiration with thy whole desire. Give great thanks to the heavenly goodness : which treats thee with such condescension ; which visits thee with mercy arouses thee to fervour sustains thee with power : lest through thine own weight thou sink down to earthly things.⁴ For thou dost not receive this by thy own study or endeavour : but by the mere condescension of heavenly grace and divine regard ; to the end that thou mayest make progress in virtues and in greater humility : and gird thyself for future conflicts ; earnestly striving to cleave unto Me with the whole affection of thy heart : and to serve Me with ardent willingness.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1: 2 Peter i. 13. ² John xvii. 24. ³ James i. 17.

⁴ Compare St. Augustine, *Confessions*, vii. 17. *moxque diripiebat abs te pondere meo.*

II

Son. Often the fire burns : but without smoke no flame goes up. So likewise the desires of some men burn towards heaven : and yet they are not free from temptation of carnal inclination. And therefore they are not simply acting for the honour of God : in the earnest requests that they offer to Him. Such often is thy desire also : which thou didst pretend would be so earnest. For this is not pure and perfect : which is alloyed with personal interest.

Ask not for that which is delightful and advantageous to thee : but for that which is acceptable and honourable to Me : for if thou judgest aright, thou shouldest prefer and follow My appointment rather than thine own desire or anything that is desired.

I know thy desire : and have often heard thy groans. Already thou longest to be in the freedom of the glory of the sons of God ;¹ already dost thou delight in the eternal home and joyful fatherland of heaven : but that hour is not yet come ; still there is another time : and that a time of war a time of toil and trial. Thou desirest to be filled with the supreme Good : but thou canst not reach it yet. I am : wait thou for me saith the Lord until the Kingdom of God shall come.²

¹ Rom. viii. 21.

² Zeph. iii. 8 : Luke xxii. 18, combined.

Thou art still to be tried upon earth : and to be disciplined in many things. Comfort shall at times be given thee : but the abundant fulness thereof shall not be granted. Be strong therefore and stout :¹ as well in doing as in suffering what nature likes not. Put on the new man :² and be changed into another man.³

Do often what thou wouldest not : and leave undone what thou wouldest. What pleases others shall speed : what pleases thee shall not advance. What others say shall be heard : what thou sayest, shall be accounted nothing. Others shall ask and have : thou shalt ask but not obtain. Others shall be great in the praise of men : but about thee there shall be nothing be said. To others this or that shall be committed : but thou shalt be reckoned of no use. At this nature will sometimes be troubled : and it is a great thing, if thou bear it in silence. In these and many such like ways the faithful servant of the Lord is tried : how far he can deny and break himself in all things. There is scarcely any thing wherein thou hast such need to die as in seeing and bearing those things that cross thy will : especially when that which seemeth unto thee inconvenient or useless is laid on thee as a command. And because being under authority thou darest not resist the higher power ; it seems hard to thee to walk

¹ Joshua i. 7.

² Eph. iv. 24.

³ 1 Sam. x. 6.

at another's beck : and to give up all thine own opinion.

But consider son the fruit of these toils, the end so near and the reward exceeding great ; and thou wilt not grudge to bear them : but wilt have in patience the strongest consolation.¹ For instead of that little of thy will which now thou willingly forsakes : thou shalt always have thy will in heaven. There thou shalt find all that thou wilt, all, that thou canst desire : there thou shalt have within thy reach all good, without fear of losing it. There shall thy will be ever one with Mine : shall not desire any outward or personal gain. There none shall withstand thee, none shall complain of thee, none shall hinder thee, nought will come in thy way ; but all things thou canst desire shall be there together present : and refresh thy whole affection and fill it up to the brim. There I will give thee glory for the reproach which thou didst suffer ; the robe of praise² for heaviness : for the lowest place a kingly throne for ever. There shall the fruit of obedience be seen ; the labour of penance shall rejoice : and humble subjection shall be gloriously crowned.

At present then bend thyself humbly under the hand of all ; and care not who said this or commanded it : but take especial care ; that whether

¹ Heb. vi. 18.

² Is. lxi. 3.

thy prelate or thy inferior or thine equal require any thing of thee or but hint a wish, thou take it all in good part: and with a sincere resolve endeavour to fulfil it.

Let one seek this another that? let one glory in this, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times: but do thou rejoice neither in this nor in that; but in the contempt of thyself: and in the good pleasure and honour of Me alone.

This is what thou art to wish: that whether by life or by death God may be always glorified in thee.¹

CHAPTER L

HOW A DESOLATE PERSON OUGHT TO PLACE HIMSELF IN THE HANDS OF GOD

I

LORD God Holy Father be Thou now and for ever blessed; because what Thou wilt is done: and what Thou doest is good. Let Thy servant rejoice in Thee; not in himself nor in any thing else: for Thou alone art true gladness; Thou art my hope and my crown: Thou my joy and my honour O Lord.

What hath Thy servant; but what he hath received from Thee² even without any merit of

¹ Phil. i. 20.

² 1 Cor. iv. 7.

his? Thine is all that Thou hast given, and that Thou hast made.

I am poor and in troubles from my youth;¹ and my soul is sorrowful sometimes even unto tears: sometimes also my spirit is disquieted by reason of impending sufferings. I long after the joy of peace; I cry for the peace of Thy sons, who are fed by Thee in the light of consolation. If Thou give peace, if Thou pour into me holy joy; the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody: and devout in Thy praise. But if Thou withdraw Thyself as so often Thou dost; he will not be able to run the way of Thy commandments:² but rather he will bow his knees and smite his breast; because it is not now with him as yesterday and the day before when Thy candle shined upon his head:³ and under the shadow of Thy wings he was protected from the temptations which assaulted him.

II

O righteous Father and ever to be praised: the hour is come that Thy servant is to be tried.⁴ O beloved Father: meet it is that in this hour Thy servant should suffer for Thy sake. O Father evermore to be adored the hour is come which from all eternity Thou didst foreknow should come; that for a little time Thy servant should

¹ Psal. lxxxviii. 15 (lxxxvii. 16).

² Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 32

³ Job xxix. 3.

⁴ John xvii. 1.

be distressed without : but should ever live with Thee within. That he should be for a little while held cheap ; and humbled and fail in the sight of men : be wasted with sufferings and languors ; that he may rise again with Thee in the dawn of the new light : and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father ; so hast Thou appointed it and so wilt Thou have it : and that is done which Thou hast commanded. For this is a grace to Thy friend ; for Thy love to suffer and be afflicted in the world : whenever and by whomsoever Thou perittest it to befall. Without Thy counsel and providence : and without cause nothing comes to pass in the earth.¹ It is good for me Lord that Thou hast humbled me² that I may learn Thy righteous judgments : and put away all haughtiness of heart and all presumption. It is wholesome for me that shame has covered my face :³ that I may seek to Thee for consolation rather than to men. I have learned also hereby to dread Thy unsearchable judgment ; who afflictest the just with the wicked : yet not without equity and justice. I give Thee thanks for that Thou hast not spared my sins ; but hast worn me down with bitter stripes : inflicting sorrows and sending difficulties within and without.

¹ Job v. 6 (Vulgate).

² Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 71.

³ Psal. lxix. 7 (lxviii. 8).

There is none else under heaven who can comfort me: but Thou only O Lord my God the heavenly Physician of souls; who strikest and healest:¹ who bringest down to hell and bringest back.² Thy discipline over me: and Thy rod itself shall instruct me.³ Behold O beloved Father I am in Thy hands: I bow myself under the rod of Thy correction; smite my back and my neck: that I may bend my crookedness to Thy will. Make me a dutiful and humble disciple as Thou art wont to be kind, that I may be ever ready to go if Thou dost beckon. Unto Thy correction I commend myself and all that is mine: better it is to be punished here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all and several: and there is nothing in man's conscience which is hidden from Thee. Thou knowest the future before it comes: and Thou needest not that any should teach or admonish Thee of what is happening here on earth. Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress: and how useful is tribulation for scouring off the rust of sins. Do with me according to Thy desired good pleasure; and disdain not my sinful life: known to none so well and clearly as to Thee alone.

¹ Deut. xxxii. 39.

² Tobit xiii. 2.

³ Psal. xvii. 36 (Vulgate), but the *rod* is a reminiscence from some other passage, perhaps Psal. xxiii. (xxii.) 4.

Grant me Lord to know what I ought to know, to love what I ought to love: to praise what pleases Thee most; to prize what to Thee is precious: to reprove that which in Thy sight is unclean. Suffer me not to judge after the sight of the outward eyes; nor to give sentence after the hearing of the ears of ignorant men:¹ but with true judgment to discern between things visible and spiritual; and above all to be ever searching after the will of Thy good pleasure.

The thoughts of men are often deceived in their judgments: the lovers of the world too are deceived in loving only things visible. What is a man the better; for being by man deemed greater? The false man flatters the false, the vain man the vain the blind the blind the weak the weak and deceives while he flatters: and shames in truth by his vain laudation. For what every one is in Thy sight, that is he and no more: saith humble St. Francis.²

¹ Is. xi. 3.

² See Bonaventura's *Legenda S. Francisci*, 6: He studied, as Christ's disciple, to become vile in his own and in other men's eyes, remembering how it had been said by our great Master, That which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God. He was wont, too, to repeat a saying, *What every one is in God's sight, that is he and no more.* (1841.)

CHAPTER LI

THAT A MAN OUGHT TO EMPLOY HIMSELF
IN WORKS OF HUMILITY WHEN STRENGTH
IS WANTING FOR HIGHER EMPLOYMENT

SON thou canst not always stand fast in the ardent desire of virtues : nor persist in the higher degree of contemplation ; but thou must sometimes by reason of original corruption descend to inferior things : and bear the burden of this corruptible life¹ though against thy will and with weariness.

As long as thou carriest a mortal body : thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart. Thou oughtest therefore in the flesh oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh : for that thou canst not employ thyself unceasingly in spiritual studies and divine contemplation.

At such times it is expedient for thee to flee to humble and outward works : and refresh thyself with good actions ; to expect with firm confidence My coming and visitation from above : to bear patiently thy banishment and the dryness of thy mind ; till I shall again visit thee : and set thee free from all anxieties. For I will cause thee to forget thy toils, and to enjoy inward quietness ; I will spread before thee the pleasant meadows of the Scriptures : that with heart enlarged thou

¹ 2 Macc. vi. 25.

mayest begin to run the way of My commandments.¹ And thou shalt say. The sufferings of this present time: are not worthy to be compared with the future glory that shall be revealed in us.²

CHAPTER LII

THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ACCOUNT HIMSELF AS WORTHY OF COMFORT BUT RATHER AS DESERVING OF STRIPES

LORD I am not worthy of Thy consolation: nor of any spiritual visitation. And therefore Thou dealest justly with me: when Thou leavest me poor and desolate. For though I could shed a sea of tears: still I should not be worthy of Thy consolation. I am not then worthy of any thing but to be scourged and punished; because grievously and often I have offended Thee: and in many things have greatly sinned.

Wherefore if the account is justly balanced: I am not worthy even of the least comfort. But Thou O gracious and merciful God who wildest not that Thy works should perish to show the riches of Thy goodness upon the vessels of mercy,³ vouchsafest even beyond all his desert to comfort Thy servant above the manner of men.

¹ Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 32.

² Rom. viii. 18.

³ Rom. ix. 23.

For Thy consolations : are not like the soothing words of men.

What have I done Lord ; that thou shouldest bestow any heavenly comfort upon me ? I remember not that I have done any good ; but that I have been always prone to sin : and slow to amendment. It is true : and I cannot deny it. If I should say otherwise, Thou wouldest stand against me : and there would be none to defend me. What have I deserved for my sins ; but hell and eternal fire ? I confess in very truth that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt : nor is it fit that I should be named amongst Thy devout ones. And although I be unwilling to hear this ; yet for the truth's sake I will against myself lay open my sins : that I may the more readily deserve to obtain Thy mercy.

What shall I say guilty as I am, and full of all confusion ? I have no mouth to utter aught but this word only ; I have sinned Lord I have sinned : have mercy on me, pardon me. Suffer me a little that I may bewail my grief : before I go into the land of darkness a land covered with the shadow of death.¹

What dost Thou so severely require of a guilty and miserable sinner ; as that he be contrite and humble himself for his offences ? In true contrition and humiliation of heart springs hope of

¹ Job x. 20, 21.

pardon ; the troubled conscience is reconciled : lost grace is recovered ; man is preserved from the wrath to come : and God and the penitent soul meet together in a holy kiss.

Humble contrition for sins, is an acceptable sacrifice unto Thee O Lord :¹ smelling far sweeter in Thy sight than frankincense.

This is also the pleasant ointment² which Thou wouldest have poured upon Thy sacred feet : for a contrite and humble heart Thou never hast despised.

There is the place of refuge from the face of the anger of the Enemy ; there is amended and washed away : whatever guilt and pollution has come from the want of it.

CHAPTER LIII

THAT THE GRACE OF GOD DOTH NOT JOIN
ITSELF WITH THOSE WHOSE WISDOM
IS OF EARTH

I

SON. My grace is precious : it suffers not itself to be mingled with outward things, or earthly consolations. Cast away therefore all hindrances of grace : if thou desire to receive the infusion thereof. Look out for a secret place for thyself ; love to dwell alone with thyself : seek

¹ Psal. li. 17 (l. 19).

² Luke vii. 38 : John xii. 2.

words of comfort from no man ; but rather pour out devout prayer unto God : that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction and thy conscience clean. Count the whole world as nothing : prefer attendance upon God before all outward things. For thou canst not attend upon Me : and at the same time take delight in things that pass away. Remove thyself far away from acquaintance and dear friends : and deny thy mind all temporal comfort. So the blessed Apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ : to keep themselves in this world as strangers and pilgrims.¹

O what confidence shall he have at the hour of death : whom no affection to any thing detains in the world. But what it is to have a heart so estranged from all things, the diseased mind can not yet understand : nor does the carnal man know the freedom of the inward man. Notwithstanding if he would be truly spiritual ; let him renounce both those who are far off and those who are near : and beware of no man more than of himself.

If thou perfectly master thyself : thou shalt very easily bring all else under the yoke. The perfect victory is : to triumph over ourselves. For he that keeps himself in such subjection, that his senses be obedient to reason, and his

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 11.

reason in all things to Me: is truly conqueror of himself and lord of the world.

II

If thou desire to climb this height; begin manfully and lay the axe to the root:¹ that thou mayest pluck up and destroy the hidden inordinate inclination to self and to all personal and material good. From this vice this inordinate love of self: springs almost all, that must be utterly rooted out. If this be once mastered and subdued there will presently ensue great peace and tranquillity. But because few labour to be perfectly dead to themselves, or wholly go forth from themselves; they remain enmeshed in self: nor can they be lifted up in spirit above themselves. But he that desires to walk freely with Me; must mortify all his corrupt and inordinate affections: and cleave with the longing of particular love to no created thing.

CHAPTER LIV

OF THE DIFFERENT MOTIONS OF NATURE
AND GRACE

SON mark diligently the motions of Nature and of Grace; for in a very contrary and subtle manner do they move: and hardly can

¹ Luke iii. 9.

they be distinguished but by him that is spiritual and inwardly enlightened.

All men indeed desire that which is good ; and make some show of good in their words and deeds : and therefore under cover of good many are deceived.

Nature is crafty and seduces many ensnares and deceives them : and has always self for her end ; but Grace walks in simplicity, abstains from all appearance of evil,¹ shelters not under deceits : does all things purely for God's sake, in whom also she rests as her End.

Nature is loth to die or to be kept down or to be overcome : or to be in subjection or readily to be subdued ; but Grace studies self-mortification : resists sensuality, seeks to be in subjection ; longs to be defeated, has no wish to use her own liberty : loves to be kept under discipline, and desires not to rule over any ; but always to live, stand and be under God : and for God's sake is ready humbly to bow down to every ordinance of man.²

Nature strives for her own advantage : and is always thinking what profit she may reap from another ; but Grace considers not what is profitable and commodious unto herself : but what may be for the good of many.³

Nature gladly receives honour and reverence :

¹ 1 Thess. v. 22.

² 1 Pet. ii. 13.

³ 1 Cor. x. 33.

but Grace faithfully attributes all honour and glory unto God.

Nature fears shame and contempt: but Grace rejoices to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus.¹

Nature loves ease and bodily rest; but Grace cannot be idle: but cheerfully embraces labour.

Nature seeks to have things exquisite and beautiful: and abhors those which are cheap and coarse; but Grace delights in the plain and humble: despises not that which is rough, nor refuses to be clad in old rags.

Nature has an eye to the temporal, rejoices over earthly gains: sorrows for loss, is vexed by a little injurious word; but Grace looks to things eternal, cleaves not to things temporal, is not disturbed at losses, nor soured by hard words: because she has placed her treasure and joy in heaven where nothing is lost.

Nature is covetous and would rather receive than give: loves what is private and her own; but Grace is kind-hearted and sociable: shuns private interest is content with little, judges that it is more blessed to give than to receive.²

Nature inclines a man to the creatures to his own flesh, to vanities and vagaries; but Grace draws unto God and the virtues: renounces creatures avoids the world; hates the desires of

¹ Acts v. 41.

² Acts xx. 35.

the flesh, restrains wanderings : blushes to be seen in public.

Nature gladly finds some outward solace wherein she may be sensibly delighted ; but Grace seeks consolation in God alone : and to have delight in the highest Good above all that can be seen.

Nature manages every thing for her own gain and profit : she cannot do any thing for nought ; but for every gift she hopes to obtain as good or better, or praise or favour : and is very earnest to have her works and gifts and words much valued ; but Grace seeks no thing temporal : nor demands any other wages than God alone for her reward ; nor asks more of temporal necessities : than what may serve her for the obtaining of things eternal.

Nature rejoices to have many friends and kinsfolk ; she glories in noble place and pedigree : smiles on the powerful, fawns upon the rich, applauds those who are like herself ; but Grace loves even her enemies, and is not puffed up with troops of friends : nor thinks aught of dignity or lineage unless it be joined with more exalted virtue ; she favours the poor rather than the rich, sympathises more with the innocent than with the powerful : rejoices with the true man not with the deceitful ;¹ she is ever exhorting good men

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

to strive for better gifts: and by virtues to become like to the Son of God.¹

Nature soon complains of want and trouble: Grace bears poverty with firmness.

Nature judges all things by herself; strives and argues for herself; but Grace brings back all to God from whence as its Fountain it pours forth: she ascribes no good to herself nor does she arrogantly presume; she contends not nor prefers her own opinion before others: but in every feeling and thought submits herself unto the eternal wisdom and the divine scales.

Nature is eager to know secrets and hear news; she likes to appear abroad and to make proof of many things by her own senses: she desires to be acknowledged and do what gains praise and admiration; but Grace cares not to hear news or wonders, because all this takes its rise from the old corruption of man: seeing that upon earth there is nothing new or durable.

She teaches therefore to restrain the senses, to shun vain complacency and ostentation; humbly to hide those things that are praised and rightly admired: and from every act and all knowledge to seek useful fruit, and the praise and honour of God. She will not have herself nor hers blazoned abroad; but chooses that God should be blessed in His gifts: who of mere love bestows all things.

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 31.

This Grace is a supernatural light and a special gift of God : and the proper seal of the elect and pledge of eternal salvation ; it raises up a man from earth to love the things of heaven : and from being carnal makes him spiritual. The more therefore Nature is held down and subdued ; the greater Grace is infused : and every day by new visitations the inward man is reshaped according to the image of God.

CHAPTER LV

OF THE CORRUPTION OF NATURE AND
EFFICACY OF DIVINE GRACE

I

O LORD my God who hast created me after Thy Image and Likeness ;¹ grant me this grace which thou hast shewn to be so great and so necessary to salvation : that I may master my most evil nature which draws me to sin and to perdition. For I feel in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind² and leading me captive to obey sensuality in many things ; neither can I resist the passions thereof : unless Thy most holy grace fervently infused into my heart do assist me.

¹ Gen. i. 26. Like many of the Fathers, Thomas identifies the Image with Reason, the Likeness with Virtue or Grace. The former was weakened, the latter lost by the Fall.

² Rom. vii. 23.

There is need of Thy grace and of great grace, that nature may be overcome: which is ever prone to evil from her youth.¹ For through the first man Adam nature fell and was corrupted by sin: and the penalty of this stain has come down unto all mankind; so that nature itself which by Thee was created good and upright, is now the name of sin and the infirmity of corrupted nature: because the inclination thereof is left unto itself and draws to evil and to inferior things.

For the small power which remains: is as it were a spark buried in the ashes. This is that Natural Reason encompassed about with great darkness: yet still having judgment of good and evil, and discrimination between true and false; although it be powerless to fulfil all that it approves: and enjoys no longer the full light of truth nor soundness in its own affections.

Hence it is O my God that I delight in Thy law after the inward man;² knowing Thy commandment to be good just and holy:³ reproving also all evil and sin that should be avoided; yet with the flesh I serve the law of sin:⁴ whilst I obey sensuality rather than reason. Hence it is that to will what is good is present with me: but how to perform it I find not.⁵ Hence I often purpose many good things; but because grace is

¹ Gen. viii. 21.

² Rom. vii. 22.

³ Rom. vii. 12.

⁴ Rom. vii. 25.

⁵ Rom. vii. 18.

wanting to help my infirmity: upon a light resistance I start back and faint. Hence it comes to pass that I know the way of perfection; and see clearly how I ought to act: but being pressed down by the weight of mine own corruption, I rise not to what is more perfect.

II

O Lord how utterly needful is Thy grace for me, to begin any thing good, to proceed with it, and to accomplish it; for without grace I can do nothing: ¹ but in Thee I can do all things if Thy grace strengthens me.²

O Grace truly celestial; without which is no merit of our own: nor are any gifts of nature to be esteemed. Arts riches, beauty or strength: wit or eloquence are powerless before Thee without Thy grace O Lord. For gifts of nature are common to good and bad; but the peculiar gift of the elect is grace or love: and they that bear this seal are accounted worthy of eternal life. So eminent is this grace: that neither the gift of prophecy nor the working of miracles nor any lofty speculation is of any esteem without it. No not faith or hope, nor other virtues: are unto Thee acceptable without charity and grace.³

¹ John xv. 5.

² Phil. iv. 13.

³ 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

III

O most blessed Grace that makest the poor in spirit rich in virtues: and him who is rich in many goods humble in heart; come thou down unto me, replenish me early with thy comfort:¹ lest my soul faint for weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech Thee Lord that I may find grace in Thy sight; for Thy grace is sufficient for me:² though other things that nature longs for be not obtained. Although I be tempted and vexed with many tribulations, yet I will fear no evils: so long as Thy grace is with me. This is my strength: this gives counsel and help. It is stronger than all enemies: and wiser than all the wise.

It is the school-mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline; the light of the heart, the solace of affliction, the dispeller of gloom: the cure of fear, the nurse of devotion, the fountain of tears. Without it what am I but a dry tree; and an unprofitable branch only meet to be cast away?³ Let Thy grace therefore Lord always prevent and follow me; and make me to be continually

¹ Psal. xc. (lxxxix.) 14.

² 2 Cor. xii. 9.

³ The autograph has *stips inutilis ad eiiciendum*, which Hirsche defends, but *stips* is certainly an error for *stirps*. There is a reference to Is. xiv. 19, *Tu autem proiectus es de sepulcro tuo quasi stirps inutilis pollutus. Aridum lignum* is from Luke xxiii. 31.

given to good works: through Jesus Christ Thy Son. Amen.¹

CHAPTER LVI

THAT WE OUGHT TO DENY OURSELVES AND IMITATE CHRIST BY THE CROSS

I

SON. The more thou canst go out of thyself: the more wilt thou be able to pass into Me. As to desire nothing outward makes peace within: so to renounce thyself within joineth thee unto God. I wish thee still to learn perfect resignation of thyself, according to My will: without contradiction or complaint.

Follow thou Me. I am the Way the Truth and the Life.² Without the Way there is no going; without the Truth there is no knowing: without the Life there is no living. I am the Way which thou must follow; the Truth which thou must believe: the Life which thou must hope for.

I am the inviolable Way; the infallible Truth: the never-ending Life. I am the straightest Way; the sovereign Truth: Life true Life blessed Life uncreated. If thou remain in My way thou shalt know the Truth; and the Truth shall make thee free:³ and thou shalt lay hold on eternal Life.⁴

¹ Our Collect for the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity: in the Missal, the *Oratio* for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

² John xiv. 6.

³ John viii. 31, 32.

⁴ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

If thou wilt enter into life: keep the commandments.¹ If thou wilt know the truth: believe Me. If thou wilt be perfect: sell all.² If thou wilt be My disciple: deny thyself.³ If thou wilt have a blessed life: despise this life present. If thou wilt be exalted in heaven: humble thyself in the world. If thou wilt reign with Me: carry the Cross with Me. For only the servants of the Cross: find the way of blessedness and of true light.

II

O Lord Jesus forasmuch as Thy life was poor and despised by the world: grant me grace to imitate Thee though with the world's contempt. For the servant is not greater than his Lord:⁴ nor the disciple above his Master.⁵ Let Thy servant be trained in Thy life: for therein is my salvation, and true holiness. Whatsoever I read or hear besides it: gives me not full refreshment or delight.

III

Son inasmuch as thou knowest and hast read all these things: blessed shalt thou be if thou do them.⁶ He that hath My commandments and keepeth them: he it is that loveth Me. And I will love him; and will manifest Myself unto

¹ Matt. xix. 17. ² Matt. xix. 21.

³ Matt. xvi. 24.

⁴ John xiii. 16. ⁵ Matt. x. 24: Luke vi. 40.

⁶ John xiii. 17.

him :¹ and will make him sit together with Me in My Father's kingdom.²

O Lord Jesu as Thou hast said and promised : so truly let it be and may I not be undeserving. I have received the Cross I have received it from Thy hand ; I will carry it and carry it even unto death : as Thou hast laid it upon me. Truly the life of a good monk is a Cross : yet a guide to Paradise.³ We have begun it is not lawful to go back : neither may we turn aside.

IV

Come brothers march together : Jesus will be with us. For Jesus we took up this Cross : for Jesus let us persevere in the Cross. He will be our Helper : who is our Guide and Forerunner. Behold our King goes on before us : and He will fight for us.⁴ Let us follow manfully, let no man fear terrors ; let us be ready to die valiantly in battle : nor bring such disgrace on our glory⁵ as to flee from the Cross.

¹ John xiv. 21.

² Rev. iii. 21.

³ Thomas is here quoting a rhyming hexameter verse of his own, from his Epigram on the Cross. There are in all four lines :—

Vita boni monachi crux est : sed dux paradisi.

Portat portantem : saluat sua uulnera flentem.

Firmat mutantem : tollit ad aethera mentem.

Vincit tentantem : daemonem de coelo cadentem.

There is a reference to the second line above, ii. 12.

⁴ Neh. iv. 20.

⁵ 1 Macc. ix. 10. The following chapter is omitted in the Magdalen MS.

CHAPTER LVII

THAT A MAN SHOULD NOT BE TOO MUCH
DEJECTED WHEN HE FALLETH INTO
SOME DEFECTS

SON. I am more pleased by patience and humility in adversities: than by much comfort and devotion when things go well. Why art thou so grieved for every little matter spoken against thee? Although it had been much worse: thou oughtest not to have been disturbed. But now let it pass. It is not the first nor is it new: nor will it be the last if thou live long. Thou art manly enough: so long as nothing adverse comes in thy way. Thou canst give good advice also and strengthen others with words; but when tribulation comes suddenly to thy door: thou failest in counsel and strength. Note well thy great frailty: of which thou hast often experience in small vexations.

It is notwithstanding for thy good: when these and such like trials happen. Put it out of thy heart for thou knowest better; and if tribulation have touched thee: yet let it not cast thee down nor long entangle thee. Bear it at least patiently: if thou canst not joyfully. Although thou be pained to hear and feel indignation; restrain thyself: and suffer no angry word to pass out

of thy mouth whereby the little ones may be offended.

Soon will the storm now raised be calmed: and the inward bitterness will be sweetened by the return of grace. I yet live saith the Lord and am ready to help thee and to give thee more than ordinary consolation: if thou put thy trust in Me and devoutly call upon Me. Be calmer: and gird thyself to greater endurance.

All is not spoiled: although thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted. Thou art man and not God. Thou art flesh, not angel. How canst thou always abide in the same state of virtue; when this was not given to an angel in heaven, nor to the first man in Paradise? I am He who lifts up the mourners in safety;¹ and those that know their own weakness: I advance to My Divinity.

Lord blessed be Thy word: sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb.² What should I do in these great tribulations and difficulties; unless Thou didst comfort me with Thy holy words? If only I may at length attain to the haven of salvation:³ what matter is it what or how much I suffer? Grant me a

¹ Job v. 11. ² Psal. xix. 10 (xviii. 11): cxix. (cxviii.) 103.

³ Compare the Post-communion in *Exaltatione Sanctae Crucis* (Wilson's *Gelasian Sacramentary*, p. 198), *ut portum salutis tuae ualeant apprehendere.*

good end: grant me a happy passage out of this world. Be mindful of me O my God: and direct me in the straight way towards Thy kingdom. Amen.

CHAPTER LVIII

THAT HIGH MATTERS AND GOD'S SECRET
JUDGMENTS ARE NOT TO BE NARROWLY
ENQUIRED INTO

I

SON. Beware thou dispute not of high matters nor of the secret judgments of God, why this man is so left, and that man taken into such great favour; why also one is so afflicted: and another so eminently exalted. These things are beyond all reach of man's faculties: neither can any reason or disputation avail to search out the judgment of God.

When therefore the Enemy suggests these things unto thee, or curious men pry into them: answer with the Prophet. Thou art just Lord: and Thy judgment is right.¹ And again. The judgments of the Lord are true, and justified in themselves.² My judgments are to be feared, not discussed: for they cannot be grasped by the understanding of man.

¹ Psal. cxix. (cxviii.) 137.

² Psal. xix. 9 (xviii. 10).

Also enquire not, nor debate of the merits of the saints: which of them is holier than other, or which shall be the greater in the kingdom of heaven. Such matters oftentimes breed strifes and barren contentions: they also nourish pride and vain glory whence arise envies and dissensions; whilst one proudly endeavours to exalt one saint: and the other another. But the wish to know and search out such things bears no fruit; and rather is displeasing to the saints: for I am not the God of dissension but of peace;¹ which peace consisteth rather in true humility: than in self-exaltation.

Some in the ardour of love are drawn with fuller affection to these saints or to those: but it is human affection rather than divine. I am He who made all the saints; I gave them grace: I gave them glory. I know what each has deserved; I prevented them with the blessings of My sweetness:² I foreknew My beloved ones before the beginning of time.³ I chose them out of the world they chose not Me first:⁴ I called them by grace, I drew them by mercy. I led them safe through sundry temptations; I poured into them glorious consolations; I gave them perseverance: I crowned their patience. I acknowledge both the first and the last: I embrace

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

² Psal. xxi. 3 (xx. 4).

³ Rom. viii. 29, 30.

⁴ John xv. 19.

all with love inestimable. I am to be praised in all my saints ; I am to be blessed above all things and honoured in every one : whom I have thus gloriously exalted and predestinated without any precedent merits of their own.

He therefore that despiseth one of the least of Mine ; honoureth not the greatest : for I made the small and the great.¹ And he that disparages any of the saints : disparages Me also and all others in the kingdom of heaven.

They all are one through the bond of charity ; their thought is the same their will is the same : and in love they are all united in one. And again which is far higher : they love me more than themselves or any merits of their own. For being ravished above self and drawn out of love of self, they plunge wholly into love of Me : in whom also they rest in fruition. Nothing can turn them back or hold them down ; for being full of the eternal Truth, they burn with the fire of unquenchable charity.

Let therefore carnal and animal men who can love nothing but their own selfish joys : forbear to dispute of the state of the saints. They add and take away according to their fancies : not as it pleases the eternal Truth. Many are ignorant : especially those who being but slenderly enlightened, can seldom love any with a perfect

¹ Wisdom vi. 7 (8).

spiritual love. They are as yet much drawn by natural affection and human friendship to this man or to that ; and as they find themselves in things below : so do they frame their fancies of things in heaven. But there is an immeasurable distance between the things which the imperfect imagine : and those which the illuminated behold through revelation from above.

II

Beware therefore son, that thou handle not with curiosity things which exceed thy knowledge ; but rather be this thy business and endeavour : to be found even the lowest in the kingdom of God. Though any man should know who is the holier or who is accounted greatest in the kingdom of heaven ; what would this knowledge profit him, unless he should therefore humble himself in My sight and rise up to give the greater praise to My Name ? Far more acceptable to God is he that thinks of the greatness of his own sins and the smallness of his virtues, and how far he is from the perfection of saints : than he who disputes of their higher or lower degree. Better it is to entreat the saints with devout prayers and tears, and with humility of mind to implore their glorious suffrages : than with vain enquiry to search narrowly into their secret things.

They are well yea right well contented : if men

would but content themselves and restrain their vain discourses. They glory not of their own merits ; for they ascribe no goodness to themselves but all to Me : who of My infinite love have given them all things. They are filled with so great love of the Divinity and with such an overflowing joy ; that no glory is wanting to them : and no happiness can be wanting.

All the saints the higher they are in glory the humbler are they in themselves : and the nearer and dearer unto Me. And therefore thou hast it written ; that they did cast their crowns before God and fell down on their faces before the Lamb : and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever.¹

III

Many enquire who is greater in the kingdom of God : who know not whether they shall be found worthy to be numbered among the least. It is a great thing to be even the least in heaven, where all are great : for they all shall be called and shall be Sons of God.² The least shall become a thousand :³ and the sinner of an hundred years shall die.⁴

For when the disciples asked who should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven : they received such an answer as this. Except ye be converted

¹ Rev. iv. 10.

³ Is. lx. 22.

² 1 John iii. 1.

⁴ Is. lxv. 20.

and become as little children : ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child : the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.¹

Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves freely with little children : because the low gate of the kingdom of heaven will not give them entrance. Woe also to the rich, who have here their consolations ;² for whilst the poor enter into the kingdom of God : they shall stand lamenting without. Rejoice ye humble, and ye poor be filled with joy ; for yours is the kingdom of God :³ if at least ye walk in Truth.⁴

CHAPTER LIX

THAT ALL OUR HOPE AND TRUST IS TO BE FIXED IN GOD ALONE

LORD what is my confidence which I have in this life ; or what is my greatest comfort from any thing under heaven ? Is it not Thou O Lord my God ; of whose mercy there is no number ?

Where was it ever well with me without Thee ?

¹ Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

² Luke vi. 24.

³ Luke vi. 20.

⁴ Is. xxxviii. 3 : 2 John 4 : 3 John 3, 4. At the end of this chapter in the Magdalen MS. is written the word *Finis*. The following chapter, which in that MS. is numbered lxiv., the prayers being reckoned as distinct chapters, was added by a later hand, which is thought to belong to the seventeenth century.

or when could it be ill with me when Thou wert by? I had rather be poor for Thee: than rich without Thee. I choose rather with Thee to be a pilgrim on earth: than without Thee to possess heaven. Where Thou art there is heaven; and where Thou art not: there is death and hell. Thou art all my desire: and therefore I must needs sigh cry and earnestly pray unto Thee. In short there is none whom I can fully trust none that can give me timely help in my necessities: but only Thou my God. Thou art my hope Thou my confidence: Thou art my Comforter and in all things most faithful.

All men seek their own; Thou desirest my salvation and my profit only: and turnest all things to my good. Although Thou exposest me to divers temptations and adversities; Thou orderest all this to my advantage: who art wont to try Thy beloved ones a thousand ways. And in this trial Thou art not less to be loved and praised: than if Thou didst fill me full of heavenly consolations.

In Thee therefore Lord God I set up my whole hope and refuge: on Thee I rest all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all weak and inconstant: whatsoever I behold out of Thee. For many friends cannot profit, nor strong helpers assist: nor prudent counsellors give a helpful answer, nor books of the learned comfort; nor any precious

substance deliver, nor any secret and lovely place give shelter : unless Thou Thyself dost assist help strengthen console instruct and guard. For all things that seem to make for peace and felicity ; without Thee are nothing : and do bring in truth no felicity at all.

Thou therefore art the End of all good the Height of life, the Depth of all that can be spoken : and to hope in Thee above all things is the strongest comfort of Thy servants. To Thee do I lift up mine eyes : in Thee my God the Father of mercies¹ do I put my trust. Bless and sanctify my soul with heavenly blessing, that it may become Thy holy habitation and the abode of Thine eternal glory ; and that nothing be found in this temple of Thy Dignity : which can offend the eyes of Thy Majesty. According to the greatness of Thy goodness, and multitude of Thy mercies look upon me : and hear² the prayer of Thy poor servant who is exiled far away in the land of the shadow of death.³ Protect and keep the soul of Thy little servant amidst all the dangers of this corruptible life :⁴ and by Thy grace accompanying guide it along the way of peace to the home of everlasting day. Amen.

There is no *explicit* after this book in the Autograph.

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3.

³ Is. ix. 2.

² Psal. lxviii. 17 (lxix. 16).

⁴ 2 Macc. vi. 25 (Vulgate).

